

QUINZAINÉ
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT
CANNES 2021



A Night of Knowing Nothing

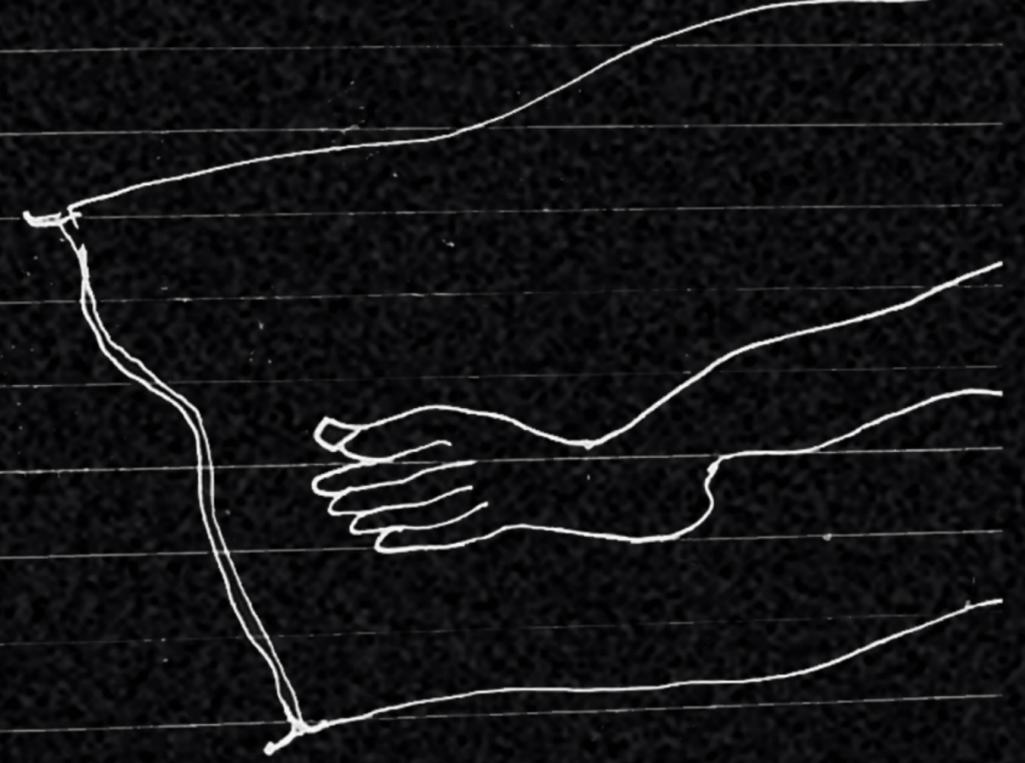
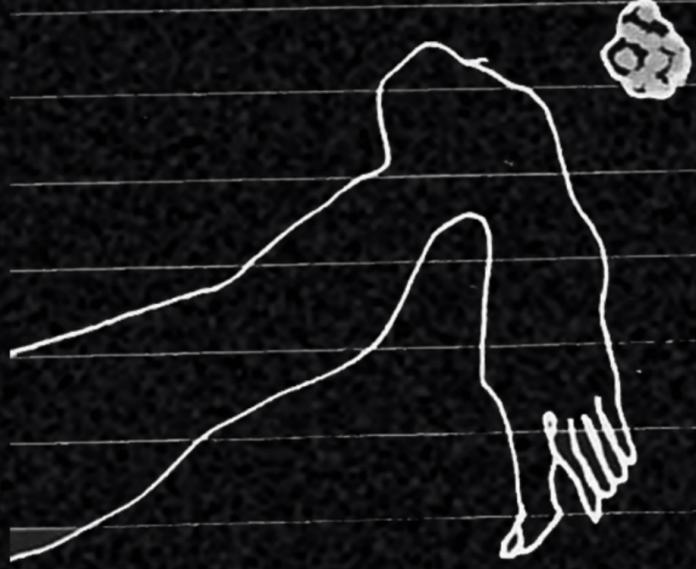
~ film by Payal Kapadia



संडे की सुबह, कैंपस अभी जागा नहीं

A university student in India, writes letters to her estranged lover, while he is away. Through these letters, we get a glimpse into the drastic changes taking place around her. Merging reality with fiction, dreams, memories, fantasies and anxieties, an amorphous narrative unfolds.





पुष्पारी याद में, पुष्पारी ल

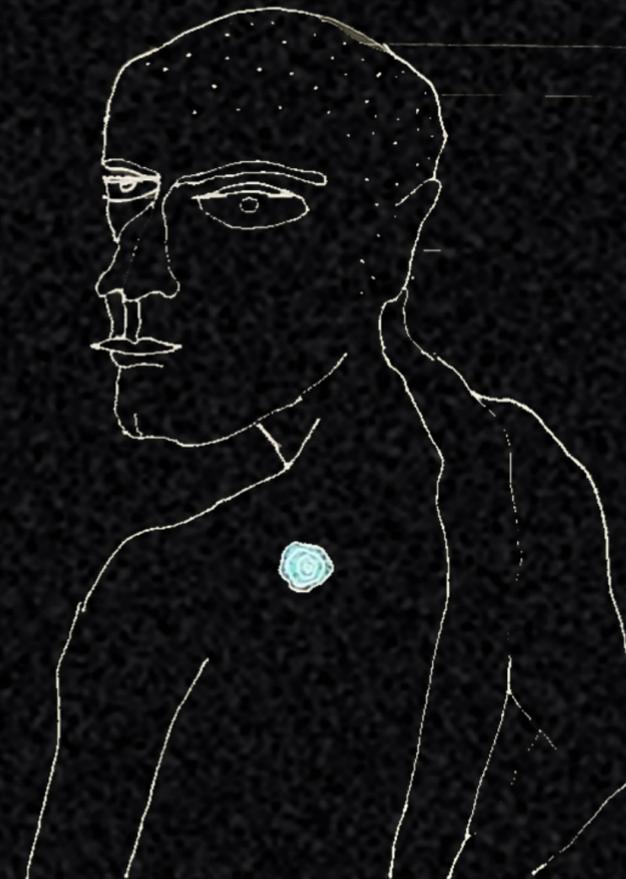
DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

We began shooting in 2017. Ranabir and I started to document life around us and through that, we started documenting our friends.

Over the years we shot extensively - parties, birthdays, or just long afternoon naps. We were not always sure of what we were doing but because it was amongst people we knew well, the shooting process was intimate and casual.

Some time passed and there was still no real sense of what the film would be. All we had were the memories that we were collecting with our borrowed camera and sound recorder. Through these documentations, and testimonies of our friends, their dreams, memories and anxieties, an image of a section of the youth began to emerge.

As we began to put some sequences together, some of our friends gave us footage that they had shot in other universities. They shot it because they had a pressing need to document, but like us, they were unsure of what they wanted to do with it. We began to find more and more of such footage – rushes borrowed from friends, old family archives and viral videos off the internet.





Our collected images became an ever-growing archive of memories – memories of the time that we had lived and witnessed. Soon, even the footage we had shot, began to feel as if it were ‘found’, perhaps as a time capsule of our own past. We began to devise a narrative to connect all these seemingly unrelated images.

The narrative we chose was a love story. Love in India is often wrought with caste, class and religious differences. The film finds its form in letters, written by a young woman at the university to her estranged lover. They have been separated by his parents who don’t approve of their relationship. Through these letters that span many years, we get a sense of a section of the youth who are caught in both personal struggles as well as larger social struggles, as they deal with the drastic changes that take place around them. Perhaps this is why we chose the title, *A Night of Knowing Nothing*, like a long, unpredictable night, where we are all in the dark of what to expect next. The title was also ‘found’ on the walls of a university, scribbled under a flickering tube light by an unknown poet.

The film uses an amorphous form, grainy, black and white footage that creates a sense of nostalgia. But it is not nostalgia for the past, because in no way do we believe

that the past was better. It is a nostalgia for the present – our current times that have forced many of us to respond to the circumstances around us. Maybe it is a nostalgia for the romantic idea of being young and conscientious – to fight for a more fair and equal society.

A Night of Knowing Nothing is our homage to the public university system in India. For centuries, certain sections of Indian society have been denied access to education. The public university system was designed to correct these historical wrongs. Although it may not have always succeeded in doing so as caste and other discriminations still exist within its inherent structures, public universities still potentially provide spaces for true freedom, both physical and intellectual where nothing is sacrosanct and everything needs to be questioned. This is the freedom that we need to strive for, for the future generations to come so that young people who have access to it can free themselves from the society that binds them.

The film is a long dream, told from the point of view of a gentle, feminine voice.

- Payal Kapadia



यहाँ जिदगी रुकती नहीं

CREW

Director
Payal Kapadia

Letter's of L read by
Bhumisuta Das

Photography & Editing
Ranabir Das

Written By
Payal Kapadia & Himanshu Prajapati

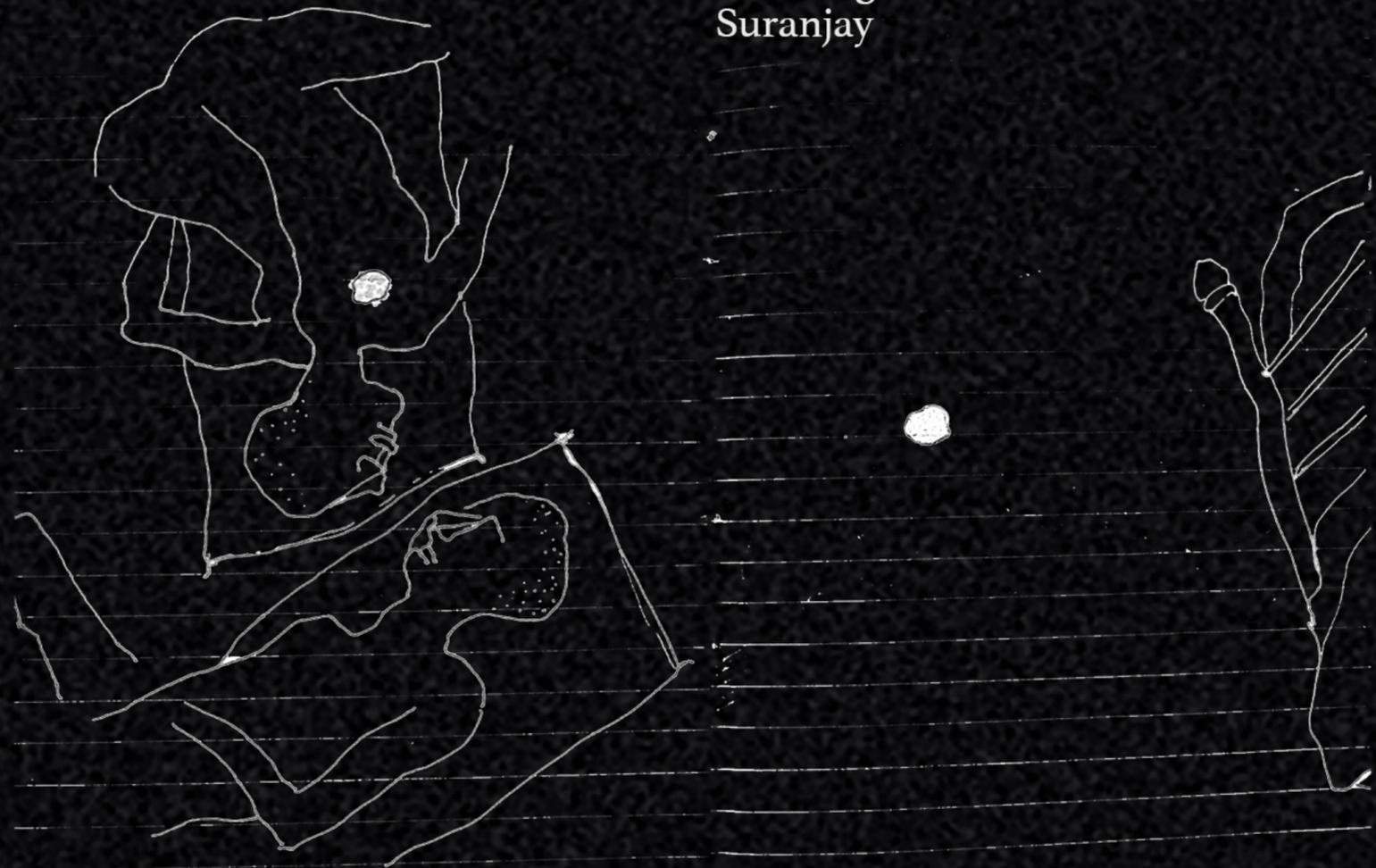
Producers France
Thomas Hakim & Julien Graff

Producer India
Ranabir Das

Sound
Moinak Bose
Romain Ozanne

Colour Grading
Lionel Kopp

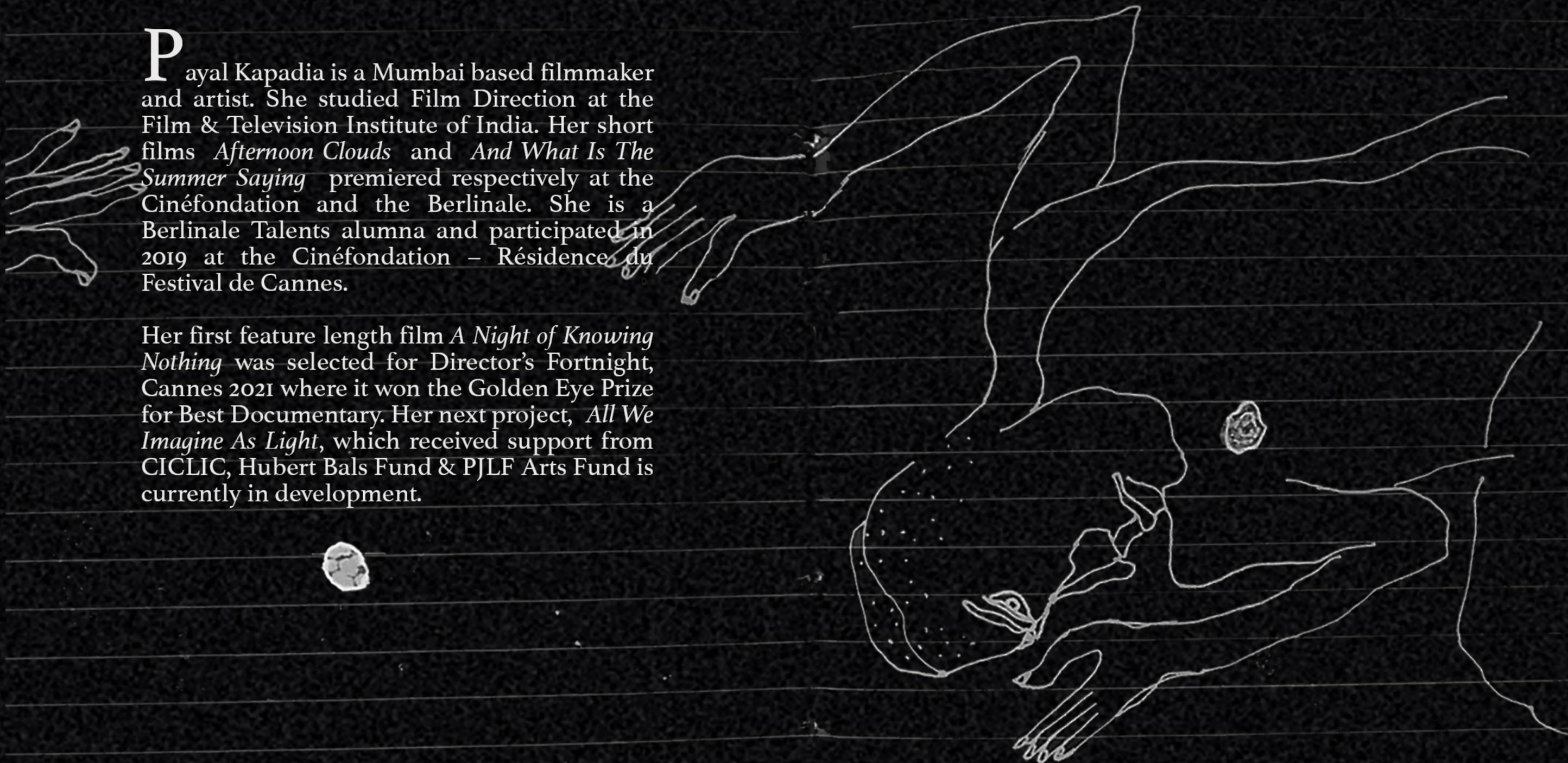
Drawings
Suranjay



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Payal Kapadia is a Mumbai based filmmaker and artist. She studied Film Direction at the Film & Television Institute of India. Her short films *Afternoon Clouds* and *And What Is The Summer Saying* premiered respectively at the Cinéfondation and the Berlinale. She is a Berlinale Talents alumna and participated in 2019 at the Cinéfondation – Résidence du Festival de Cannes.

Her first feature length film *A Night of Knowing Nothing* was selected for Director's Fortnight, Cannes 2021 where it won the Golden Eye Prize for Best Documentary. Her next project, *All We Imagine As Light*, which received support from CICLIC, Hubert Bals Fund & PJLF Arts Fund is currently in development.



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