

FOTOFOCUS

Academy Award-Winning Filmmaker Roger Ross Williams to Present the FotoFocus 2024 Spring Lecture

The Academy, Emmy, and Peabody Award-winning filmmaker to speak at the
National Underground Railroad Freedom Center on March 21



Roger Ross Williams by Justin Bettman

(CINCINNATI, OH — JANUARY 30, 2024) — Cincinnati-based nonprofit arts organization and champion of lens-based art, [FotoFocus](#) is pleased to announce filmmaker **Roger Ross Williams** as the latest speaker in its Lecture and Visiting Artist Series. The talk, which is entirely free and open to the public, will take place at the **National Underground Railroad Freedom Center** on **Thursday, March 21** at **6:00 pm**.

Academy, Emmy, and Peabody Award-winning filmmaker, Williams explores the personal and political with intention, offering an intimate examination of some of the most paramount social issues of our time. The decorated documentarian became the first African American director to win an Academy Award with his short film *Music by Prudence* in 2009. In the years since, Williams has ascended, collecting more accolades and co-founding the production company One Story Up. Williams has continued to flourish, with 2023 marking the premiere of the Emmy Award-winning *The 1619 Project* for Hulu, as well as his debut scripted feature, *Cassandra*, which stars Gael García Bernal and premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

“Roger Ross Williams is a visionary within contemporary filmmaking. His work speaks to the power of film as a critical resource and change agent. FotoFocus is honored to host him for our

signature Lecture and Visiting Artist Series,” said **FotoFocus Executive Director Katherine Ryckman Siegwarth**.



The 1619 Project, courtesy of Hulu

The event is **free and open to the public**. For more information, please visit fotofocus.org.

FotoFocus brings photography and lens-based art programming to Cincinnati year-round. The 2024 Spring Lecture marks Williams’ second FotoFocus event, following participation in the Lens Mix conversation series in 2020. Previous speakers in the FotoFocus Lecture and Visiting Artist Series have included **Doug Aitken, Thomas Demand, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Roe Ethridge, Larry Fink, Sky Hopinka, Zoe Leonard, Laurie Simmons, Alec Soth, and William Wegman**.

ABOUT ROGER ROSS WILLIAMS

Roger Ross Williams is an Oscar, Emmy, NAACP Image Awards, Webby, and Peabody award-winning director, producer, and writer, and was the first African American director to win an Academy Award with his film *Music by Prudence*. Williams directed *Life, Animated*, which was nominated for an Academy Award and won the Sundance Directing Award and three Emmys. He is the recipient of the Career Achievement Award from the International Documentary Association, The Woodstock Film Festival Maverick Award, The NYU Alumni Achievement Award, and an honorary doctorate from Lafayette College.

Williams’ production company, One Story Up, produced the acclaimed Netflix food series, *High on the Hog*; an adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates’ *Between the World and Me*; the Ben Crump

documentary *Civil*; and the award-winning film *Master of Light*. His first scripted feature, *Cassandra*, from Amazon Prime Video, had its world premiere at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival. He also recently released *The Super Models* for Apple TV+, which follows the lives and careers of iconic supermodels Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, Christy Turlington, and Linda Evangelista throughout the 1980s and 1990s; *Stamped from the Beginning* based on the book by Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, for Netflix; and the second season of *High on the Hog*.

ABOUT FOTOFOCUS

FotoFocus is a Cincinnati-based nonprofit arts organization that champions photography and lens-based art through exhibitions and public programming. Since 2010, the organization has engaged art and educational institutions throughout the region to support and expand the cultural dialogue around the medium that has come to define our time. With an emphasis on intellectually and academically rigorous programs, the organization provides uniquely enriching access to lens-based art, film, and practices inspired by photography. FotoFocus has collaborated with organizations, curators, academics, and more than 2600 artists and participants, to present over 750 exhibitions and programs.

Signature FotoFocus programming includes the **FotoFocus Biennial**, most recently held in 2022 with the theme *World Record* and will return later this year. Past editions have presented work across the Cincinnati region by historic and contemporary artists, including Berenice Abbott, Eugène Atget, Roe Ethridge, Zanele Muholi, Karl Blossfeldt, Francis Bruguière, Thomas Ruff, and Akram Zaatari. Other landmark events include the **FotoFocus Symposium**, which has contributed significant dialogue and insight to culturally relevant topics including the controversial Mapplethorpe exhibition, and the **FotoFocus Lecture and Visiting Artist Series**, which has brought globally renowned artists such as Zoe Leonard and William Wegman to Cincinnati.



Gael García Bernal in *Cassandra*, courtesy of Amazon

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