

BAMPFA Launches Yearlong *Georgian Cinema Now* Film Series



Still from *Taming the Garden* (Salomé Jashi, 2021). Courtesy Big World Pictures.

Ten-Day Opening Series and Symposium Brings Ten Georgian Filmmakers and Experts to Berkeley

(Berkeley, CA) August 19, 2026—The Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive announced today that it will present *Georgian Cinema Now*, a yearlong film series surveying the creative renaissance of contemporary Georgian cinema while examining the mounting political pressures facing independent filmmakers in the country today. Beginning September 23, 2026 and continuing in four installments through Fall 2027, the series foregrounds living filmmakers who are reshaping Georgia's cinematic traditions through fiction, documentary, and formally adventurous hybrid work. The opening installment comprises thirteen films across nine screening programs, accompanied by

a free public symposium and a delegation of ten Georgian filmmakers, critics, and cultural experts appearing in Berkeley for conversations throughout the series.

BAMPFA has established itself as the leading North American cinemathèque for the presentation and study of Georgian cinema. Its landmark film series *Discovering Georgian Cinema* (2014–15), developed with The Museum of Modern Art and co-curated by BAMPFA's Susan Oxtoby with MoMA curator Jytte Jensen, was the largest presentation of Georgian film ever mounted in North America. Featuring some sixty programs spanning more than a century of film history, the retrospective was presented in Berkeley and New York before traveling to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and TIFF Cinemathèque in Toronto. *Georgian Cinema Now* advances that institutional commitment by turning its focus toward the filmmakers shaping the direction of independent Georgian cinema in the twenty-first century.

Over the past fifteen years, Georgian filmmakers have earned acclaim at major international festivals including the Berlinale, Karlovy Vary, Locarno, and IDFA (Amsterdam). That creative flourishing now exists alongside growing political repression and threats to freedom of expression, with independent filmmakers facing increasingly difficult conditions for financing, producing, and exhibiting work at home. The opening installment brings many of those artists to Berkeley—including Elene Naveriani, Salomé Jashi, Nino Orjonikidze, Vano Arsenishvili, Anna Dziapshipa, Anka Gujabidze, and Keto Kipiani—and includes the September 26 *Georgian Cinema Now Symposium – Activism in Authoritarian Times: The Republic of Georgia as a Case Study*, which places the films within the broader political and cultural context of contemporary Georgia. Additional experts on Georgian political history include cultural critics and historians Salomé Asatiani and Zaal Andronikashvili as well as journalist and film critic Carmen Gray.

Five of the films featured in *Georgian Cinema Now* will also screen in satellite presentations at Stanford University, in conjunction with the opening of the series at BAMPFA. Screenings will take place in the university's McMurtry Building and will be free and open to the public, with appearances by the visiting filmmakers.

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Georgian Cinema Now is organized by Susan Oxtoby, BAMPFA Director of Film and Senior Film Curator and a recipient of the Government of Georgia's Order of Honor Medal in 2015 for her work organizing that project. Additional installments and screening dates for 2027 will be announced later this year. For more information about the series and newly announced programs, visit bampfa.org/program/georgian-cinema-now-part-1.

Screening Schedule

All screenings and the symposium take place at BAMPFA, 2155 Center Street, Berkeley, except where otherwise noted. Additional installments of Georgian Cinema Now will continue in 2027; future dates will be announced separately. Dates, times, guests, and programs are subject to change.

Fall 2026 – Part 1

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2026, 7 PM

Temo Re screens at Stanford University on Tuesday, September 29 at 3:45 PM

It Will Be Better Before and Temo Re

(Georgia, 2024/2025)

In Conversation: Keto Kipiani, Anka Gujabidze, Salomé Asatiani, and Anna Dziapshipa

It Will Be Better Before began as a collaboration between two directors. After five years, one of the directors, Keto Kipiani, re-edited and modified the film, sharing her perspective and feelings throughout the creation process. "The title, with its mixed tenses that collapse time, conveys the confused desperation of a future torn from one's control . . . a personal story about hanging onto glimmers of meaning but also, implicitly and inevitably, a national one" (Carmen Gray, *Senses of Cinema*). With *Temo Re*, photographer and filmmaker Anka Gujabidze creates a multifaceted portrait of Georgia's capital city, Tbilisi. The protagonist, an actor who earns his living as a motorcycle courier, is played by Temo Rekhviashvili, the author of *Courier's Tales*, the novel upon which the film is based. Composed of thousands of black-and-white still images, this unique film won the Best Short Film Award when it premiered at the International Film Festival Rotterdam.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2026, 7 PM

Screens at Stanford University on Tuesday, September 29 at 7 PM

Blackbird Blackbird Blackberry

(Georgia/Switzerland, 2023)

In Conversation: Elene Naveriani, Salomé Asatiani, and Salomé Jashi

(*Shashvi shashvi maq'vali*). Based on feminist writer Tamta Melashvili's celebrated novel, this gem of a film follows Etero (Eka Chavleishvili), a forty-eight-year-old woman who lives happily in a provincial Georgian village. Content with her independent lifestyle, Etero's world is changed by a near-death experience. Naveriani's deft direction offers a portrait of a woman who doesn't conform to society, standing in contrast to the norms of present-day Georgia. Beautifully realized, the film's exceptional use of color and the strong performance by Chavleishvili deliver a work akin to the subtlety and deadpan humor found in the films of Aki Kaurismäki.

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FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2026, 3 PM

A Tunnel

(Georgia/Germany, 2019)

In Conversation: Nino Orjonikidze, Vano Arsenishvili, and Susan Oxtoby

The stationmaster in Zvare, a remote valley town in Georgia, is bracing himself for change. Soon the high-speed trains of the New Silk Road will race through the old train station built in 1890, during the period of Tsar Nicholas II. The Chinese-led construction project is blasting through the mountains to construct the world's third-longest tunnel, and this brings the opposition of the local residents, who do not want their land to be spoiled. Nino Orjonikidze and Vano Arsenishvili's documentary presents the transformation and follows the rural Georgians as underdogs in this massive intrusion of capitalism on the villagers and their landscape.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2026, 7 PM

Screens at Stanford University on Tuesday, September 22 at 7:30 PM

Taming the Garden

(Georgia/Switzerland/Germany, 2021)

In Conversation: Salomé Jashi and Elene Naveriani

"[An] extraordinary, savagely poetic film" (Wendy Ide, *Observer*). (*Motviniereba*). With astonishing cinematic style, *Taming the Garden* tracks the surreal uprooting of ancient trees from their Georgian locales. With each removal, tensions flare between workers and villagers. Some see financial incentives—new roads, handsome fees—while others angrily mourn the loss of what was assumed to be an immovable monolith of their town's collective history and memory. With a steady and shrewdly observant eye, Salomé Jashi documents a single man's power over Earth's natural gardens: how majestic living artifacts of a country's identity can so effortlessly become uprooted by individuals with no connection to the nature they claim as their own.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2026, 11:30 AM–5 PM

Georgian Cinema Now – Activism in Authoritarian Times: The Republic of Georgia as a Case Study

Free Admission

Copresented by BAMPFA and the Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies at UC Berkeley

Free and open to the public, this symposium offers an invaluable introduction to the political and cultural context for the *Georgian Cinema Now* programs that will be shown at BAMPFA over the course of the coming year. Guest speakers will offer a range of perspectives, from analyzing the political situation in Georgia to sharing their experiences from the field as activists on the frontlines fighting for their civil rights. We will hear from journalists, media commentators, cultural historians, teachers, and independent filmmakers on the challenges and threats they face as a result of the Georgian government's introduction of the foreign agent law—censorship, arrests, trials, and imprisonment—and parallels with broader global threats to democracy.

The symposium will include a screening of the film *A Review Lesson* (2026), directed by Tamar Mshvenieradze.

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2026, 7:30 PM

Crossing

(Georgia/Sweden/Turkey/Denmark/France, 2024)

Introduction: Carmen Gray

"One of the most hotly anticipated LGBTQ+ films of 2024, *Crossing* is the fourth feature from Swedish auteur Levan Akin (*And Then We Danced*; AMC's *Interview with the Vampire*). The film follows Lia, a retired schoolteacher, who makes good on a promise to trace the whereabouts of her long-lost niece Tekla, who she's told has fled their native Georgia for Istanbul, with the help of her neighbor and a lawyer fighting for trans rights" (Frameline). With three exquisite performances that "vividly transcend generational divides, *Crossing* is a defiant city symphony and a compassionate tale of hope, identity, and forgiveness" (MUBI).

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2026, 1:30 PM

English Teacher and Bakhmaro 2050

(Georgia, 2012/2024)

In Conversation: Nino Orjonikidze, Vano Arsenishvili, Anka Gujabidze, and Susan Oxtoby

Georgia's movement to teach English to schoolchildren is the backdrop for this beautifully observed documentary about an English teacher, Bradley Nelson from South Africa, and his experiences in a remote Georgian village, Sajijao. There he encounters both the warmth of the local community, as well as some resistance to the "linguistic revolution" as a national initiative. A finely drawn portrait of a critical moment in Georgia's development as an independent nation in the post-Soviet era. Before construction begins on a major housing complex in Bakhmaro, a resort town in western Georgia that travelers visit for the special healing properties of the air, filmmaker Anka Gujabidze observes life as it is. Employing superimpositions and dissolves, this documentary portrait ruminates on the changes that will come with construction and what will be lost.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2026, 4:30 PM

An Incomplete Day in the History of Georgia 10.06.93.

(Georgia, 2026)

In Person: Salomé Jashi

(*Erti Arasruli Dghe Sakartvelos Istoriidan 10.06.93*). Derived solely from video recordings of Georgian parliamentary proceedings on June 10, 1993, when Eduard Shevardnadze was the head of state, *An Incomplete Day in the History of Georgia* presents the debate surrounding the introduction of Georgia's national currency coupon to replace the Russian ruble. Members of parliament voice their concerns from the floor, questioning the resolutions presented by the vice prime minister and president of the National Bank. How should the country's leaders proceed in light of domestic challenges such as starvation, fuel shortages, budget shortfalls, and rapid inflation? Viewed with hindsight, this document from the early days of Georgian independence reminds us how fragile the democratic process can be.

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2026, 7 PM

Screens at Stanford University on Tuesday, September 22 at 3:45 PM

Self-Portrait Along the Borderline

(Georgia, 2016–23)

In Conversation: Anna Dziapshipa, Salomé Asatiani, Anka Gujabidze, and Susan Oxtoby

(*Avtoportreti zghvarze*). Anna Dziapshipa was born in Tbilisi to an Abkhazian father and a Georgian mother. As a child, her Abkhazian surname was initially associated with her grandfather's footballing success, but it has since become closely linked to the conflict that has kept the two nations in opposition since 1992. This situation had a profound effect on her childhood and identity, caught in the middle of two warring countries. In *Self-Portrait Along the Borderline*, the filmmaker returns to the Abkhazian family home built by her grandfather, located in a country that is off-limits to Georgian citizens and still not recognized by Georgia. The program is followed by Dziapshipa's shorts *Contemplation* (2017), an investigation of Georgia's Soviet past and a so-called "Terror House" in Tbilisi's Sololaki district, and *Dear Dirty Tbilisi* (2016), which uses Guram Tsibakhashvili's photo archive from the 1990s to revisit the early days of Georgian independence and its vibrant art scene.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2026, 7 PM

Wet Sand

(Georgia/Switzerland, 2021)

In Conversation: Elene Naveriani and Carmen Gray

"All my works are portraits of people in society. That's how I construct or see the world around me" (Elene Naveriani, *Variety*). A seaside community is rocked after an elder dies by suicide. Naveriani's beautifully realized, award-winning drama unfolds with quiet power, as the tensions and long-held prejudices within the sleepy Black Sea village build inexorably to their dramatic denouement. Granddaughter Moe—an urban outlier with a rebellious streak—finds only a few compassionate souls to take her side—among them the alluring café server Fleshka and her employer, the dapper Amnon. They form a trio of quiet defiance in this film that reminds us of how deep the roots of fear, homophobia, and prejudice still run (Celeste Wong, *Frameline*).

Acknowledgments

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About BAMPFA

Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) ignites cultural change for a more inclusive and artistic world. BAMPFA has been uniquely dedicated to art and film since 1970, with international programming that is locally connected and globally relevant. It holds more than 25,000 artworks and 18,000 films and videos in its collection, with particular strengths in modern and contemporary art and historical Chinese painting, as well as the world's largest collection of African American quilts. As part of the University of California, Berkeley, BAMPFA is committed to artistic diversity through its robust slate of art exhibitions, film screenings, artist talks, live performances, and educational programs that shed new light on the art of the past and connect our audiences with leading filmmakers and artists of our time. BAMPFA sits on the edge of campus and downtown Berkeley, where it welcomes visitors from across and beyond the Bay Area in a repurposed building designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro.

Image Credit

Still from *Taming the Garden* (Salomé Jashi, 2021), courtesy Big World Pictures.

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