



**12th ANNUAL DOC NYC VISIONARIES TRIBUTE TO HONOR  
JOE BREWSTER, MICHELE STEPHENSON, AND LOIS VOSSEN  
FOR THEIR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENTS; PLUS AWARDS FOR ELIZABETH LO  
AND CARLOS A. GUTIERREZ, ON NOVEMBER 12**

**DOC NYC FESTIVAL TAKES PLACE IN PERSON AND ONLINE  
NOVEMBER 12 - NOVEMBER 30**

New York, September 10, 2025 - DOC NYC, America's largest documentary festival, announced the honorees for its 12th annual Visionaries Tribute, which will take place at New York's Gotham Hall on November 12. **Lifetime Achievement** honors will be presented to Emmy Award-winning filmmakers **Joe Brewster and Michèle Stephenson** (*True North; Going to Mars: The Nikki Giovanni Project*) and the founding executive producer of Independent Lens **Lois Vossen**. The **Robert and Anne Drew Award for Documentary Excellence** will go to **Elizabeth Lo** (*Mistress Dispeller*), and the **Leading Light Award** will go to **Carlos A. Gutiérrez**, co-founding executive director of Cinema Tropical.

DOC NYC's 2025 festival will take place both in person and online. The in-person events will take place November 12-20 in New York City at IFC Center, SVA Theatre, and Village East by Angelika. The festival's online presentations will extend through November 30, with online screenings available to viewers across the US.

"Over the past 12 years, the Visionaries Tribute has become an essential date on the documentary calendar," said DOC NYC co-founder and Director of Special Projects Thom Powers, who oversees the event. "This year's honorees represent the spirit of perseverance against adversity. Our Lifetime Achievement recipients, Joe Brewster, Michèle Stephenson, and Lois Vossen have made a deep impact on this community over many years. Elizabeth Lo has created unforgettable cinematic moments in films such as *Mistress Dispeller* and *Stray*. And Carlos Gutierrez has been the leading promoter of Latin American filmmakers in the U.S."

#### **LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

The **Lifetime Achievement Award** honors individuals with a substantial body of documentary film work. Past recipients are Alan Berliner, Marcia Smith, Michael Moore, Deborah Shaffer, Werner Herzog, Geralyn White Dreyfous, Joan Churchill, Raoul Peck, Sam Pollard, Jean Tsien, Martin Scorsese, Michael Apter, Wim Wenders, Orlando Bagwell, Sheila Nevins, Errol Morris,

Stanley Nelson, Jonathan Demme, Barbara Kopple, Jon Alpert, Frederick Wiseman, D.A. Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus, and Albert Maysles.

The 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award goes to:

Emmy, Guggenheim, and Sundance award-winning duo **Joe Brewster and Michèle Stephenson** co-founded Rada Studio to balance their family life with their passion for the arts. Together, they have built an impressive portfolio of fiction films, documentaries, immersive XR installations, and books. Through a Black Atlantic lens, they reimagine narratives of resistance and healing, weaving fiction, immersive, experimental, and hybrid forms that center a Black Radical tradition and the lived experiences of the Black diaspora exemplified by their genre bending works: *Changing Same XR*, *Black Girls Play: The Story of Hand Games*, *The Going To Mars: The Nikki Giovanni Project*, and more recently *True North*, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival.

**Lois Vossen**, founding executive producer of Independent Lens on PBS and YouTube, leads the programming of 25-30 original documentary projects made by independent filmmakers each season. Independent Lens documentaries including *I Am Not Your Negro*, *Philly DA*, *Newtown*, *Tower*, and *The Invisible War* build empathy and empower people to better understand themselves and each other. Awarded Best Series by the International Documentary Association (IDA) six times, Independent Lens has received 11 Academy Award nominations and 75 Emmy, Peabody, and duPont–Columbia University Awards. Vossen was inducted into the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) Silver Circle, and honored as Nonprofit Leader of the Year by the Anthem Awards.

## **ROBERT AND ANNE DREW AWARD FOR DOCUMENTARY EXCELLENCE**

The **Robert and Anne Drew Award for Documentary Excellence** is named for the pioneering husband and wife filmmaking team. The award includes a \$5,000 cash prize contributed by Drew Associates. The award honors a mid-career filmmaker or partnership that excels in observational filmmaking. Three of the past six recipients of the award have gone on to win the Oscar for Best Documentary. Past honorees include Lucy Walker, Maite Alberdi, Ondi Timoner, Peter Nicks, Alexander Nanau, Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert, Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi and Jimmy Chin, Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady, Dawn Porter, Kim Longinotto, and Laura Poitras.

The 2025 Robert and Anne Drew Award goes to:

**Elizabeth Lo** is an award-winning director, producer, and cinematographer whose films have premiered at Venice, TIFF, Sundance, Tribeca, DOC NYC, and other distinguished festivals. Elizabeth has been featured in Filmmaker Magazine's "25 New Faces of Independent Film" and DOC NYC's "40 Under 40." Her 2020 debut feature, *Stray*, was a New York Times "Critic's Pick," released by Magnolia Pictures and Hulu. Her second feature, *Mistress Dispeller*, had its world premiere at the 2024 Venice International Film Festival, where it won two awards. It went on to win over twenty other festival awards. She was born and raised in Hong Kong.

Jill Drew, the general manager of Drew Associates, who established this award at DOC NYC, said, "Elizabeth Lo knows how to let her characters reveal themselves in action. When she commits to telling a story, she draws on all the skills and subtlety of her craft, allowing her film to flow in the best tradition of cinéma vérité."

## LEADING LIGHT AWARD

The **Leading Light Award** honors an individual making a critical contribution to documentary in a role other than as a filmmaker. The past recipients are Jenni Wolfson, Erika Dilday, Sonya Childress, Chi-hui Yang, Yvonne Welbon, Cynthia Lopez, Tabitha Jackson, Cara Mertes, Molly Thompson, Tom Quinn, and Dan Cogan.

The 2025 Leading Light Award goes to:

**Carlos A. Gutiérrez** is the co-founding executive director of Cinema Tropical, the New York-based media arts non-profit organization founded in 2001 and the leading promoter of Latin American cinema in the U.S. As a guest curator, he has organized series at institutions such as The Museum of Modern Art, Film at Lincoln Center, the Guggenheim Museum, BAM Film, and Anthology Film Archives. He co-curated the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar in 2007 and again in 2025 for its 70th anniversary. He is a founding member of the Distribution Advocates collective and currently serves as artistic director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's Latin Wave film festival, and co-director of Cinema Tucsón. As a publicist, he has overseen press campaigns for numerous films, including the U.S. theatrical releases of Patricio Guzmán's acclaimed trilogy *Nostalgia for the Light*, *The Pearl Button*, and *The Cordillera of Dreams*. He is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) and serves on the Board of Directors of Film Forum.

Support for the Visionaries Tribute comes from Supporting Sponsors National Geographic Documentary Films and Netflix.

For information about purchasing a table at the Visionaries Tribute or advertising in the program book, please contact Allyson Morgan at [allyson@docnyc.net](mailto:allyson@docnyc.net).

More news about the festival, including features and shorts named to the festival's Short List sections, the main slate lineup, jurors for DOC NYC's competitive sections, and other updates will be announced in the coming weeks.

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DOC NYC is produced and presented by IFC Center, a division of AMC Networks.

To inquire about sponsor or partnership opportunities for DOC NYC, contact Executive Director Raphaela Neihausen at [raphaela@docnyc.net](mailto:raphaela@docnyc.net).

#### **TICKETS AND PASSES:**

Passes for the DOC NYC PRO conference, held November 13-20, are on sale now [here](#).

Festival All Film Passes are now on sale at an earlybird rate [here](#).

Individual film tickets will go on sale in October when the program is announced.

#### **ONLINE PRESS OFFICE:**

Downloadable images of Visionaries Tribute honorees can be found [here](#).

#### **MEDIA CONTACT:**

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