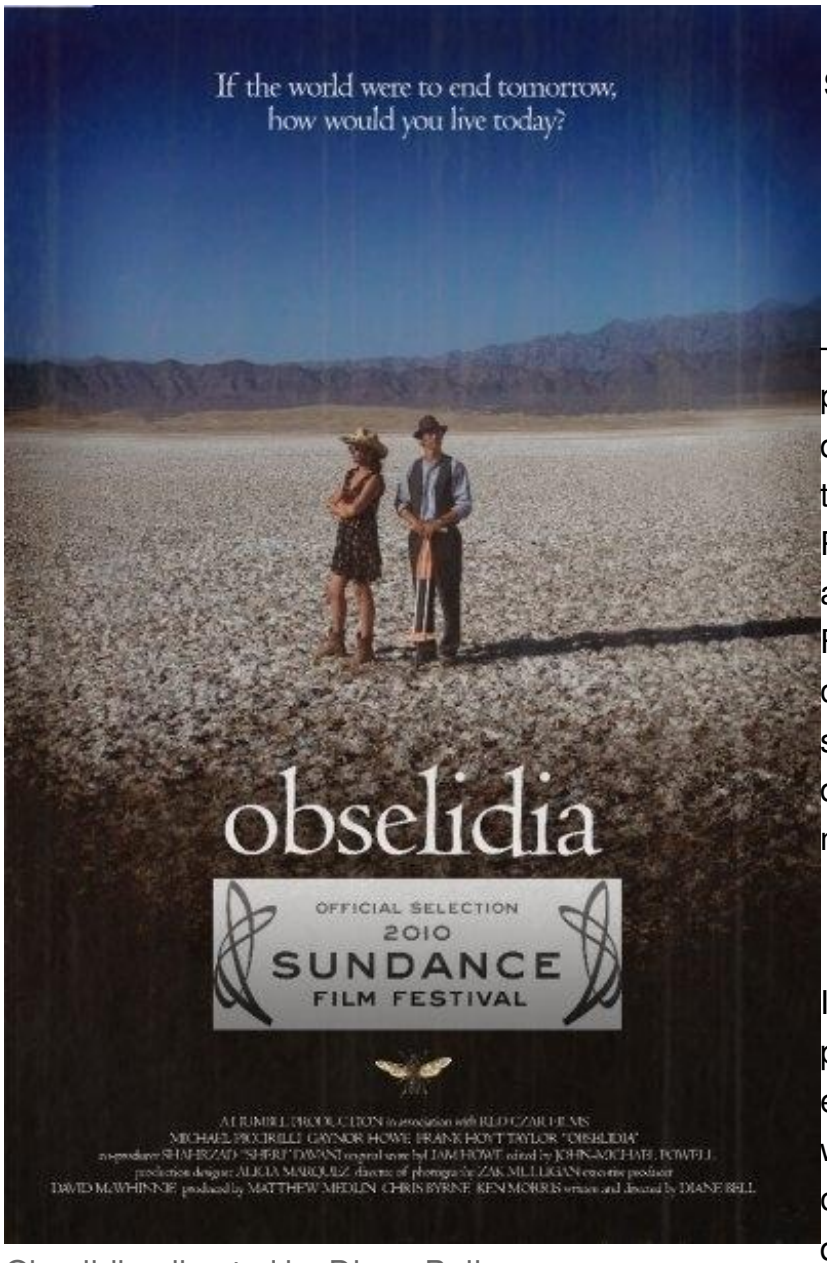
Alfred P. Sloan Prize Awarded to 'Obselidia'

January 29, 2010



Obselidia, directed by Diane Bell

Park City, UT (RPRN) 01/29/10 — Sundance/Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship and Commissioning Grants Also Announced

– The 2010 Sundance Film Festival is pleased to announce that *Obselidia*, directed by Diane Bell, is the recipient of this year's Alfred P. Sloan Prize. The Prize, which carries a $20,000 cash award by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, is presented to an outstanding feature film focusing on science or technology as a theme, or depicting a scientist, engineer or mathematician as a major character.

In Diane Bell's soft spoken and profound debut feature, George, an encyclopedia salesman, decides to write *The Obselidia* a compendium of obsolete things. In his quest to document nearly extinct occupations, he befriends Sophie, a beautiful cinema projectionist who works at a silent movie theatre. Sophie believes that nothing is obsolete as long as someone loves it. When they interview a reclusive scientist who predicts that 80 percent of the world's population will be obliterated by irreversible climate change by the year 2100, the two must face the question, if the world is going to disappear tomorrow, how are we going to live today?

Diane Bell was born in Scotland and grew up in Japan, Australia and Germany. She has a degree in Mental Philosophy, is a practitioner of Ashtanga Yoga, and has written a number of optioned and commissioned screenplays. She currently resides in Los Angeles. Obselidia is her

first film as writer/director.

The Alfred P. Sloan Prize is a major component of the Sundance Science-in-Film Initiative, which is made possible by a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. The Initiative supports the development and exhibition of new independent film projects that explore science and technology themes or that depict scientists, engineers and mathematicians in engaging and innovative ways. In addition to the Prize, the Initiative presents a panel discussion at the Festival that brings together scientists and filmmakers to explore compelling, contemporary issues regarding science in film; and, in the Sundance Feature Film Program, the Initiative supports the Sloan Commissioning Fund, which provides resources for Initiative projects early in the development phase; and the Sloan Fellowship, which develops eligible projects at the Sundance Feature Film Labs towards production. This Initiative blends the Sloan Foundation's goal of enhancing public understanding of science and technology with Sundance Institute's mission to foster independent voices and compelling storytelling in film.

Previous Alfred P. Sloan Prize Winners include: Max Mayer, *Adam (*2009); Alex Rivera, *Sleep Dealer* (2008); Shi-Zheng Chen, *Dark Matter* (2007); Andrucha Waddington, *The House of Sand* (2006); Werner Herzog, *Grizzly Man* (2005) and Shane Carruth, *Primer* (2004).

The winning film was selected by a committee of film and science professionals based on the quality of the film's presentation of science and technology themes and/or characters. This year's Alfred P. Sloan jury members include:

Peter Galison is the Joseph Pellegrino University Professor of the History of Science and of Physics at Harvard University. His work explores the complex interaction between the three principal subcultures of physics--experimentation, instrumentation, and theory. His books include: "How Experiments End" (1987), "Image and Logic" (1997), "Einstein's Clocks, Poincaré's Maps" (2003) and, with Lorraine Daston, "Objectivity" (2007), and (among others) the co-edited "Architecture of Science", "Picturing Science, Producing Art", "Scientific Authorship", and "Einstein for the 21st Century". He has made two documentary films, the first with Pamela Hogan, Ultimate Weapon: The H-bomb Dilemma (2000), and the second with Robb Moss, Secrecy (about national security secrecy and democracy), which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2008. At present, he is completing a book, "Building Crashing Thinking" (on technologies that re-form the self) and has just begun a new documentary film, again with Robb Moss, on the long-term storage of nuclear waste.

Darcy Kelley is a neuroscientist whose research focus is the neurobiology of vocal communication and the ways in which brains become male or female. She has been on the faculty of Rockefeller, Princeton and Columbia Universities and heads the graduate program in Neurobiology and Behavior at Columbia. Her long-standing interest in the portrayal of science and scientists in the arts has led to consulting for the Sloan project at the Ensemble Studio Theater, and to participating in the New York, Tribeca, East Hampton and Imagine film festivals. She served as the model for the Gena Gershon biolgist role in Kettle of Fish.

Joe Palca is a science correspondent for NPR. Since joining NPR in 1992, Palca has covered a range of science topics – everything from biomedical research to condensed matter physics. He comes to journalism from a science background, having received a Ph.D. in psychology from UC-Santa Cruz where he worked on human sleep physiology. Palca has won numerous awards. He was President of the National Association of Science Writers from 1999-2000. He lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and two children.

Paul Sereno is a Professor at the University of Chicago and Explorer-in-Residence at National Geographic. As a paleontologist he leads expeditions to far-flung places as diverse as the Sahara Desert and the Tibetan plateau, in search of fossils to help chart the evolution of dinosaurs. Sereno co-founded Project Exploration, a nationally recognized, nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to making the wonders of science accessible to the public and providing career opportunities in science for city kids. He has earned the Chicago Tribune's Teacher of the Year Award (1996), the Boston Museum of Science's Walker Prize for extraordinary contributions in paleontology (1997), Columbia University’s Medal for Excellence (1999), and the Presidential Award for Science Mentoring (2009). Esquire magazine named him one of the hundred "Best People in the World,” Newsweek magazine listed him in its “Century Club,” and People magazine included him among its "50 Most Beautiful People".

Marianna Palka - was born and raised in Glasgow, Scotland and moved to New York City at age 17 to act in theater. After acting in multiple plays, she moved to Los Angeles where she currently resides. The American film she wrote, directed and starred in GOOD DICK was in Dramatic Competition at The Sundance Film Festival 2008. Marianna was the youngest director at the festival that year. GOOD DICK was the first screenplay she had ever written. GOOD DICK played in festivals across the globe and had its UK premiere at The Edinburgh Film Festival, where Palka was honored with the New Director's Award by Sean Connery. GOOD DICK was self released in the US to much success in 2009 by Palka and her co-producers, Jason Ritter, Jen Dubin and Cora Olson.

Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

This Sloan-Sundance partnership forms part of a broader national program by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to stimulate leading artists in film, television, and theater; to create more realistic and compelling stories about science and technology; and to challenge existing stereotypes about scientists, engineers, and mathematicians in the popular imagination. Over the past decade, the Foundation has partnered with some of the top film schools in the country – including AFI, Carnegie Mellon, Columbia, NYU, UCLA, and USC – and established annual awards in screenwriting and film production and an annual first-feature award for alumni. The Foundation has also started an annual Sloan Feature Film Prize at the Hamptons International Film Festival and initiated new screenwriting workshops at the Hamptons and TriBeca Film Festival. In addition, it continues to work with leading writer/producers and major studios to create more films, TV shows and TV movies featuring scientists, mathematicians and engineers.

Sundance/Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship Grant

A BIRDER'S GUIDE TO EVERYTHING (writers Rob Meyer & Luke Matheny, director Rob Meyer; producer Paul Miller) A year after the death of his mother and on the eve of his father's remarriage, a 15 year-old bird fanatic, his equally dorky friends, and a cute new girl from school embark on an adventurous road trip to chase an extinct bird they may have spotted.

Co-writer/director Rob Meyer received his MFA at NYU`s Graduate Film Program. His most recent short film *Aquarium* played at over 50 festivals internationally and has won more than 20 awards, including an Honorable Mention at Sundance, Best Narrative Short at Atlanta Film Festival, Best Live Action Short at Santa Barbara Film Festival, Best Film at Miami Shorts Film Festival and Best Student Short at Woodstock Film Festival. Prior to his studies at NYU, Rob was an Associate Producer for PBS`s NOVA and National Geographic. A graduate of Yale University, Rob has a joint degree in Humanities and Studies in the Environment and plays the violin. *A Birder's Guide To Everything* will be his first feature.

Sundance/Alfred P. Sloan Commissioning Grant

BED(writers Cath Le Couteur & Joel Davis, director Cath Le Couteur) An ensemble film about five strangers who come together in a 'bed-rest' experiment to aid astronauts in space.

Co-writer/director Cath Le Couteur is a graduate of the UK's National Film and Television School. Her short films STARCHED and SPIN have won a number of awards including Canal Plus Best Short Film, Edinburgh Special Jury Award, Outstanding Directorial Achievement Winterthur, Best Cinematography Bristol. Cath has previously held a Cinefondation Cannes Residency during which she developed her road movie feature *Tayte and Cody* (attached to Ipso Facto Films). This year Cath will be taking up a Rockefeller Bellagio Residency to develop *Bed*, an ensemble film which she is co-writing with Joel Davis. Cath is also the co-founder of social entrepreneurship organization Shooting People (shootingpeople.org), the online film makers community with 35,000 members across the UK and NY.

2010 Sundance Film Festival Sponsors

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About Sundance Institute

Founded by Robert Redford in 1981, Sundance Institute is a not-for-profit organization that fosters the development of original storytelling in film and theatre. Internationally recognized for its artistic development programs for directors, screenwriters, producers, film composers, playwrights and theatre artists, Sundance Institute has nurtured such projects as *Angels in America*, *Spring Awakening*, *Boys Don't Cry* and *Born into Brothels.*

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About the author:

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Founded by Robert Redford in 1981, Sundance Institute is a not-for-profit organization that fosters the development of original storytelling in film and theatre, and presents the annual Sundance Film Festival. Internationally recognized for its artistic development programs for directors, screenwriters, producers, film composers, playwrights and theatre artists, Sundance Institute has nurtured such
projects as Angels in America, Spring Awakening, Boys Don't Cry, Sin Nombre, Born into Brothels and Trouble the Water. www.sundance.org.

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