

INTUITIVE SOUL

Filmography so far: *Up on the Roof* (2021), *Audrey* (2020), *Blood Rites* (2020), *Nowhere* (2019), *This is Football - Belief* (2019), *Isha* (2018), *And it was the same with my son* (2018).

When did you discover you wanted to be a cinematographer and what inspired you to follow this career path?

After shooting stills obsessively and watching movies all through my teenage years I decided to apply to film school. Photography led me to film and I loved it because I could tell a story in one image. I was fascinated by black-and-white documentary photography and the people and moments they were capturing. I then learned about what a cinematographer does and that was it. My mum supported me to follow my passion and pursue a career in film.

Where did you learn your craft?

I trained in my native country at UNATC (the National Film University in Bucharest) and then did an MA at the NFTS in the UK. Also, through on set shooting and directing my own shorts, as well as shooting on 16 and 35mm which I love.

What are your favourite films, and what makes them stand out to you?

A Prophet (2009) and *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). It's the kind of cinema I love - a beautiful mixture of character and plot-driven narrative where the cinematography has a documentary feel to it because it's so organic and inherent to the story. I love the language, the movement and the communication between the handheld camera and the actors. There's beauty and poetry surfacing from a world full of contrast. *La Haine* (1995) because it shows me a world I don't have access to and it is beautifully crafted and effortless. I love the developing shots and how the world is presented to the audience. *The Double Life of Veronique* (1991) - that movie is so beautiful! *Paris, Texas* (1984) - shot by my hero Robby Müller NSC BVK. All DPs reading this will know why this film stands out. Early on it taught me how to use cinematography to express the inner world of a character through framing and lighting in the most simple and bold way, without taking away from the story.

Who in the film world inspires you?

Chayse Irvin ASC CSC because of his ethos and beautiful work; Paweł Pawlikowski for his approach to filmmaking and collaboration with his DP; Reed Morano ASC because she has an impressive body of work and is an all-round inspiring woman and filmmaker; the female DPs of my generation and beyond, totally changing the industry; and the filmmakers who are creating personal work against all odds.

What's the most useful advice you've received and from whom?

Don't remember from whom, but "don't take it personally" which still saves me from heartache.

What advice would you give someone considering becoming a cinematographer?

Invest in yourself as a human and artist before you focus on the technical side - that you learn with time. Vision comes from nurturing yourself.

What have been your greatest triumphs and disasters on set?

Triumphs: Working on films that mean something to me and allow me to create a language and go beyond a conventional approach without pushing the form over the story. Working with directors whose vision meets mine - when we connect on a personal and creative level and serendipity makes it all come together in an unexpected way. It sort of reaches a spiritual level. I've had a few experiences of this kind, including making *Audrey* and short film *Nowhere* shot in Israel. Most recently, my first fiction feature with a wonderful team and cast.

Disasters: When producers don't fully support the creative and technical team and there is more pressure to deliver under crazy time restraints and compromising our ideas.

What lights your fire outside of work?

Medium format photography, travelling and learning to play drums.

What has been the biggest challenge in your career and how did you overcome it?

Getting started in the film industry and getting opportunities to show my vision and capabilities as a cinematographer. I overcome it with patience, support from industry peers (especially Illuminatrix) and focusing on the work itself. It's an ongoing process as my career develops.

What piece of kit could you not live without?

My health, my crew, ARRI Alexa Mini.

Which film would you love to have shot?

A Prophet (2009) by Jacques Audiard and *Cold War* (2018) by Pawlikowski (the story, the performances, the compositions, and the black-and-white photographic quality of the image all coming together to create a work of art). And sports movies like *Borg vs McEnroe* (2017) and *Battle of the Sexes* (2017).

Which productions are you most proud to have lensed, and why?

Purely from a cinematography point of view, *What a Wonderful World* music video shot on 16mm because it was an intuitive and free-flowing process shooting it. The documentary about Audrey Hepburn because of the journey we had making the film and the beautiful dance scenes we shot. *Nowhere* - made with Cristopher Manning - because of our total synchronicity and the results that produced. A doc I made in Iran for WeTransfer and the short that won me the cinematography award at Underwire.

What's the best and worst thing about your job?

Best: That I work with new people all the time; knowing that what we create can affect people in a positive way. Merging the technical and the creative and the energy exchange between actors, director, DP, and crew making it all happen on set.

Worst: Chasing opportunities, having to be connected and available all the time, and the lack of stability our lifestyle brings.

How would you best describe your approach to cinematography?

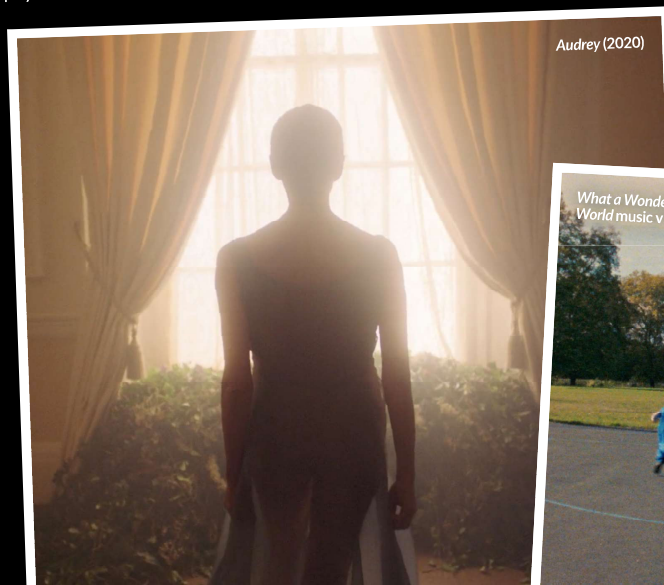
Intuitive, soulful, authentic.

What are your aspirations for the future?

Develop my career in commercials, features and drama. Work with my dream directors, creating meaningful work that affects a large audience. And I'd love to work with Pawlikowski one day.

What do you think are the industry's biggest challenges?

Taking care of the crew's well-being and mental health. Discrimination based on race, class and gender and the slow change of mentalities in that respect. ■



Audrey (2020)



What a Wonderful World music video