

2016 Report on Faculty Development Grant and Awards
November 30, 2016

Dear FDGA Administrators and Committee members,

I would like to thank the Faculty Development Grants and Awards Committee and the Office of Academic Affairs for supporting the research and production for my new film project *Hustlers and Empires*, a feature-length film project inspired by three historic works: Federico Fellini's 1968 film *Toby Dammit*; Marguerite Duras' 1984 novel *The Lover* and Iceberg Slim's 1967 novel *Trick Baby*. *Hustlers and Empires* looks at class, colonization, race and sexuality in three very different worlds: Roman Catholic Italy, circa 1968; French-occupied Saigon, circa 1930, and the African-American community of Chicago, circa 1940.

With the support of this Faculty Development grant in the amount of \$1500 I was able to travel to Rome and work on the portion of my film connected to Federico Fellini's 1968 film *Toby Dammit*, a Faustian tale of a washed up Shakespearean actor who reluctantly travels to Rome to receive a free Ferrari, and is destroyed by his own greed, in collaboration with the church and the media. Several film historians, in addition to the executive director of the American Academy in Rome, connected me to archives that house costumes and original scripts from the film. With the support of this grant I was able to go to Rome and view these materials in person. I was also able to work with a crew to recreate the final driving scene from *Toby Dammit*. I contacted a film historian who was able to track the exact path Fellini used in the original film, then worked with a film production crew to map the roads from 1968 onto the landscape of contemporary Rome. We were able to shoot the path Toby Dammit drove to his death in the original film - a shot by shot recreation from a camera rigged to a car. This footage will be used as green screen material for my film.

I received a 2015 Art Matters grant to begin this project (which supported a prior shoot in Vietnam) and am grateful to receive this support, allowing me to continue my production. Renowned New York performer John Kelly (Obie Award winner, Guggenheim Fellow) is cast in one of the leading roles, and Icelandic producer Hrafnhildur Gunnarsdottir is on board for the scenes to be shot in Iceland. In Jan 2016 I traveled to Vietnam and shot scenes for the Marguerite Duras section. This project is currently in production and has been invited to premiere at SFMOMA Spring 2018.

This trip was invaluable in allowing me to get a feel for Fellini's Rome, and bring that spirit into my film. I am thrilled to be able to include FIT and the Faculty Development Grant and Award as a supporter of my project *Hustlers and Empires*. Thank you for this generous support!

Kind regards,
Michelle Handelman
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