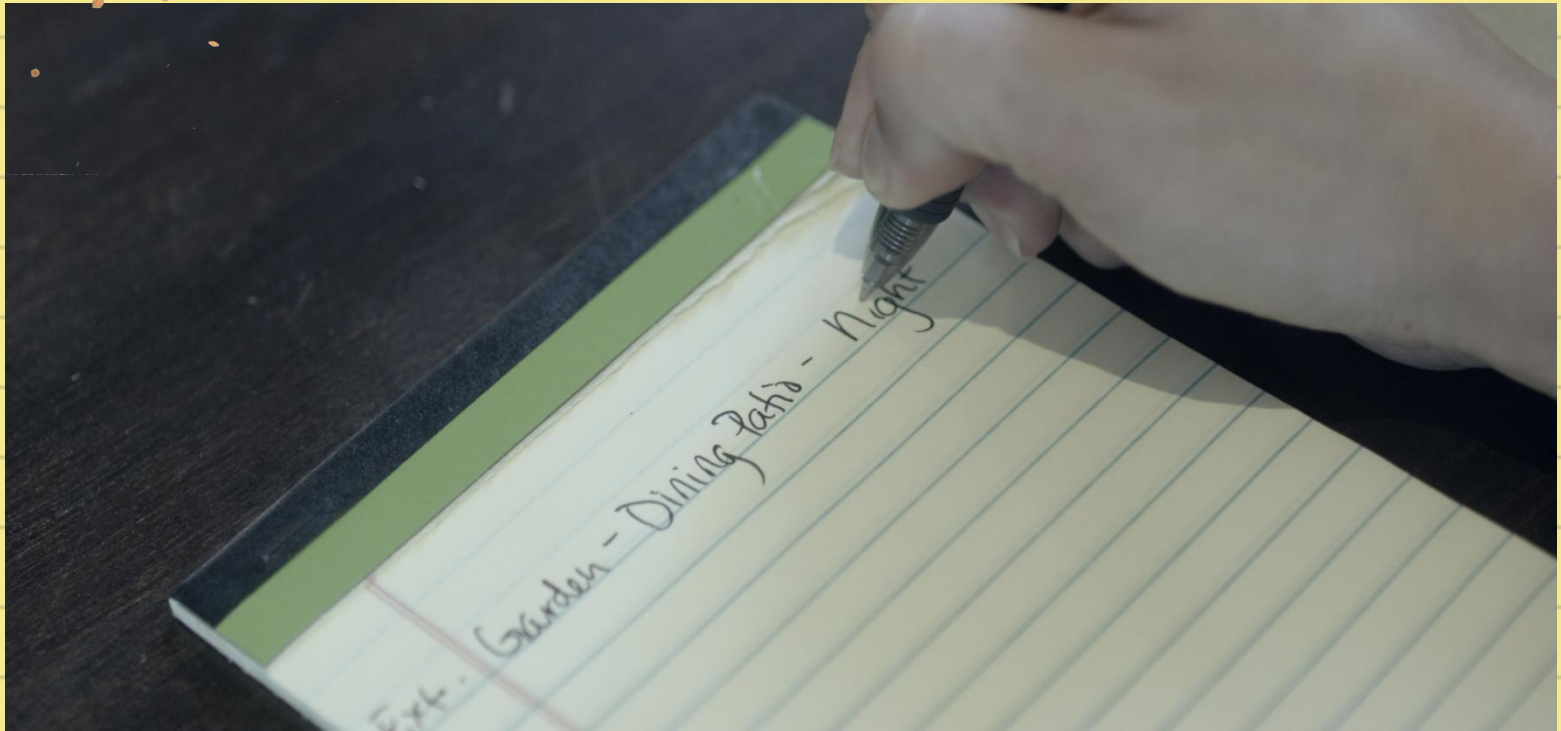


The Dinner Scene

A comedy about creative agony



Contact: Nicholas Thurkettle (Filmmaker) nt@nicholasthurkettle.com

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PROJECT OVERVIEW



“The Dinner Scene” is a new short film from Nicholas Thurkettle, writer/director of the acclaimed festival shorts “Samantha Gets Back Out There” and “The Retriever”. Cutting between a writer at work and a dramatic realization of the pages they are writing (and rewriting), it takes an irreverently cinematic approach to depicting the silent war with self-doubt every writer in every café wages each day; while also demonstrating how a scene develops from nothing into a juicy, dramatic story.

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

As both a long-time writer and a long-time teacher of writers, the act of writing fascinates me. You are always striving to hack your own creative process in the hopes that the work can be a bit better, the effort a bit less agonizing. For as many years as I've done this, it never stops being a rollercoaster of momentary triumphs and crippling doubts, and I wanted to see if I could communicate this journey cinematically.

This is my third and biggest short film – still humble in size and resources when compared with some of the stunning work I have seen out on the festival circuit, but an opportunity for major growth for both myself and the team of artists that has been building around these projects. I confess to having become fully-addicted to the world of the film festival; and after returning home from travels in support of my second film, “The Retriever”, I felt more determined than ever to stay in this incredible conversation among filmmakers and film lovers which happens all over the world. I hope this short will be a particular delight for people in that world, and that they recognize in it the Storyteller's eternal war against that dreaded enemy: The Blank Page.

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FILMMAKER BIO (1/2)



NICHOLAS THURKETTLE

(Art Director/Editor/Producer/Writer/Director)

Nicholas Thurkettle is an actor, writer, and filmmaker in Southern California. He studied theatre arts and music at Bradley University in Illinois and started in Hollywood as a story executive, for independent film producer J. Todd Harris (*The Kids are All Right*, *Piranha 3D*.) He sold his comedy screenplay *Queen Lara* to Room 9 Productions (*Thank You For Smoking*), and optioned the thrillers *7 Red* and *Snowblind* to producers while collaborating with director Antonio Negret (“Arrow”, “Lethal Weapon”) on the in-development action thriller *Under the Knife*. He wrote the teleplay for the action/sci-fi animated pilot *Children of Ether* for the Crunchyroll streaming network, which debuted on over 300 cinema screens on Anime Movie Night 2017; and he is the co-producer on the horror feature *A Ghost Waits*, now in post-production.

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FILMMAKER BIO (2/2)



Thurkettle is a member of the WGA and the Orange County Playwrights Alliance, a writer/performer with the audio drama podcast *Earbud Theater*, author of the acclaimed short story collection *Stages of Sleep*, and co-author of the novels *Seeing by Moonlight* and *A Sickness in Time*. His acting resume features voice-over work, extensive on-stage Shakespeare, and roles in the feature films *Cloudy With a Chance of Sunshine*, *Aventura!*, and *Revelator*. For his role in *Reclaiming Friendship Park* he was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the Love International Film Festival. His short film *Samantha Gets Back Out There* premiered at the Laughlin International Film Festival, and was an Honorable Mention and Finalist for Best Comedy at the IndieFest USA Film and Music Festival. His follow-up *The Retriever* played at a range of festivals including Durango* (*programmed in “Best of Fest” short film block), Boomtown, North Hollywood Cinefest, Cinema at the Edge, Bare Bones, and Phoenix.

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PRODUCTION NOTES (1/3)

“The Dinner Scene” is really two movies operating in separate realities – the “real” world of the writer at work, and the “movie” world of the romantic dinner conversation they are scripting. The two locations were shot on separate days, and cinematographer/colorist J. Van Auken used different combinations of lenses, filters, and post-production coloring to differentiate those worlds.

The café was Garden Grove’s 102 Café, where filmmaker Nicholas Thurkettle stopped for refreshment many times while performing just up the street with Shakespeare Orange County. The owners generously allowed a skeleton crew to film in the corner during business; and, working from a painstakingly-detailed shot list, the crew captured 70 different shots in just four hours’ time.



Cinematographer J. Van Auken lines up a shot of Jenaha McLearn, playing “The Writer”.

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PRODUCTION NOTES (2/3)



The unusual approach of depicting the Writer while never fully showing their face or body was inspired by an extreme close-up shot of a pair of lips Thurkettle saw in the 1992 film *Chaplin*. “I seized on this idea of distilling all the feeling and intention of a moment into one gesture, and building a narrative with them.” Jenaha McLearn, playing The Writer, had the physical discipline from years of ballet and dance training to deliver every movement needed with both precision and emotion.

For the “dinner” half, the production moved to the private residence of longtime friends John and Amanda Byrd. Warned that the gazebo which would house the romantic scene was very fragile, the crew was challenged to light, decorate, and squeeze the camera in wherever necessary without touching, leaning against, or hanging anything on the structure.

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PRODUCTION NOTES (3/3)

As the characters conjured out of the Writer's imagination, actors Holly Bitteringer and MacLeod Andrews enjoyed playing both the heightened melodramatic earnestness of their story, and their comedic dilemma of being puppeteered by a storyteller constantly hitting blocks and changing their mind.

With a total cast and crew of only nine individuals, everyone involved in "The Dinner Scene" wore multiple hats and executed under the constant indie film pressures of no money and too little time. "Everyone on this project is someone I have a history with and 100% trust in," Thurkettle says, "I only was able to conceive it knowing they had the energy, positivity, and creative high standards to pull it off. "



As the character "Pamela" envisioned by The Writer, Holly Bitteringer is lit in a more classic, "Hollywood" style.

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CREDITS

“The Dinner Scene” (2017, USA, 9’57”, color)

Holly Bittinger as PAMELA
MacLeod Andrews as DAVID
and Jenaha McLearn as A WRITER



Nicholas Thurkettle Art Director, Editor, Writer, Producer, Director
J. Van Auken Cinematographer, Colorist, Post-Production Supervisor
Darren T. Lodwick Production Sound Mixer, Boom Operator, Original Musical Score
Nikki Nina Nguyen Makeup and Hair, Production Assistant – Art Department
Jenaha McLearn Script Supervisor, Makeup Assistant
Elizabeth Susanne Production Assistant – Camera and Art Departments
Craig Good Post-Production Sound Mixing/Editing

Special thanks to SAG-AFTRA. Shot on RED. Filmed in Garden Grove and Costa Mesa, CA.

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SCREENINGS/HONORS

Version – 6.19.2018

For the latest news, visit www.nicholasthurkettle.com, or follow @NThurkettle on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Vimeo.

ACCEPTANCES TO DATE

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| Alameda International Film Festival | Bare Bones International Film and Music Festival (<i>NOMINEE – Best Micro-Short Comedy, Best Actor in a Micro-Short</i>) |
| Austin Comedy Short Film Festival (<i>WINNER – Best Romantic Comedy</i>) | Rochester International Film Festival (<i>Named to Best of the Fest</i>) |
| Borrego Springs Film Festival (<i>WINNER – People’s Choice – Best Short</i>) | Milledgeville-Eatonton Film Festival |
| Iron Mule Comedy Short Film Festival | New Haven International Film Festival |
| Dam Short Film Festival | River Bend Film Festival |
| Film Fest 52 Bethel | Film Fringe at the Cincy Fringe Festival |
| Brightside Tavern Short Film Fest (<i>NOMINEE – Best Concept</i>) | Albuquerque Film & Music Experience (<i>WINNER – Best Comedy Short</i>) |
| Trenton Film Festival | Cardiff Mini Film Festival |
| Phoenix Film Festival | Drunken Film Festival (Bradford, UK) |
| Blackbird Film Festival (<i>NOMINEE – Originality in Cinema</i>) | |
| Unreasonable Shorts | |



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