



Pietra BrettKelly | Producer/Director/Writer
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"I felt I was in the hands of a master storyteller." Still in Motion magazine

PROFILE

Pietra BrettKelly is a three times Oscar selected, Sundance award-winning filmmaker. She is also a keynote speaker, delivers masterclasses, and facilitates formal and informal discussions drawing on her journalism background and interview techniques.

Pietra follows a life of curiosity and risk-taking. To paraphrase one of her favourite artists Basquiat "I never went to film school. I just looked."

Pietra BrettKelly films have premiered at Sundance Film Festival, Venice Film Festival, Berlinale, Tribeca and Toronto Film Festivals, five of the world's top six film festivals. Her latest film CROCODILE which she has been filming in Nigeria for seven years, has just premiered at Berlinale Film Festival 2026 to sold out audiences and standing ovations. This film marks a shift in her practice, working directly with nine young Nigerian filmmakers whom she has also made co-owners of the film, bringing agency and authenticity to the film's creative perspective.

Pietra is the inaugural New Zealand Arts Foundation Laureate for Documentary Filmmaking, and is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and as such is an Oscars voter. Pietra has also mentored extensively throughout her career including Afghanistan-focussed filmmakers Elissa and Gulistan Mirzaie working with them to achieve Oscar-nomination of their film SONGS FOR BENAZIR. Pietra has also delivered master classes and creative workshops in Sweden, the US and New Zealand.

Pietra is a three times Sundance Institute alum in Creative Producing, and the invitation-only Story and Editing Labs.

Pietra's documentaries have screened on numerous international networks including BBC, Netflix, AVRO Netherlands, YLE Finland, SVT Sweden, TVNZ, SBS Australia and Pietra's recent film *YELLOW IS FORBIDDEN* was acquired by the premier international documentary film strand, BBC Storyville. Her films have also screened at the Uffizi Gallery, Florence and at MOMA, New York.

Financing and production partners include the New Zealand Film Commission, the Sundance Institute, Gucci Tribeca Fund, the Catapult Film Fund, BritDoc and the Binger Film Lab.

Her film *YELLOW IS FORBIDDEN* premiered In Competition and Opening Weekend at Tribeca Film Festival before being selected for both Best Foreign Language and Best Documentary at the Oscars. And the previous film *A FLICKERING TRUTH* opened in competition at both Venice Film Festival and Toronto Film Festival and was then selected as the New Zealand Best Foreign Language entrant for the Oscars. In 2008 *THE ART STAR AND THE SUDANESE TWINS* won the World Cinema Documentary Editing Award at Sundance Film Festival and screened in over 100 film festivals.

As producer/director/writer Pietra Brett Kelly is truly passionate about documentary, taking risks in the pursuit of more complex stories. She is motivated by stories that matter, the personal journeys that reflect a bigger issue.

Pietra specialises in making unique, intimate cinematic work that open windows into another world. Her work has a considered quietness, a non-judgmental approach that allows subjects to tell their stories.

Dame Jane Campion invited Pietra to host a masterclass at her film school, *A Wave in the Ocean*. "Pietra is an artist. Her cinema is stunning and complex. She has a voice in the film world, and tenacity to ensure it is heard," she said.

The stories Pietra captures she believes will encourage a greater understanding of each other, across language, religion, and borders.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS INCLUDE

- New Zealand Arts Laureate
- The Oscars Best Foreign Film 2018, New Zealand selection

- The Oscars Best Documentary 2018
- Member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (Oscars)
- NZFC Producer's Award, Women In Film Best Documentary 2016
- The Oscars Best Foreign Film 2015, New Zealand selection
- Qantas Film and Television Best Documentary Director
- Best Director at EIDF Seoul, Korea
- Best Documentary Whistler Film Festival, Canada
- Special Jury Prize Zurich Film Festival
- Best Feature Documentary Human Rights Film Festival, Jordan
- Best Documentary Warsaw International Film Festival
- Best Editing, Sundance Film Festival

FILMOGRAPHY

2026 CROCODILE

World Premiere: In Competition, Berlinale Film Festival

North American Premiere: In Competition, Tribeca Film Festival

In dusty Kaduna, Godwin and Raymond and their siblings transform a backyard into a universe of spaceships, explosions, and wild adventures. Armed with a single mobile phone, failing electricity but wild imaginations, as kids they begin making science-fiction films that turn everyday life into a future world set in 2089. What starts as play becomes survival - and a way to write their own narrative in a place where options are often narrow and unforgiving.

Shot over thirteen years, CROCODILE follows this homemade collective as they reject paths of crime and hardship to pursue filmmaking. Even as their work reaches global stages, they remain rooted in a reality that offers little support. Blending vérité, sci-fi, and magical realism, CROCODILE is a coming-of-age story about radical imagination—and the power to author your own future.

2018 YELLOW IS FORBIDDEN

World Premiere: In Competition, Tribeca Film Festival, April 2018, Oscar's Best Foreign Language and Best Documentary selection

Additional world film festivals including: Hot Docs, Sydney Film Festival, NZIFF, Melbourne International Film Festival, Vancouver International Film Festival, Shanghai, Heartland International Film Festival, USA, Guangzhou Documentary Film Festival 2022: Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco

YELLOW IS FORBIDDEN is a modern day Cinderella story where the brave, diminutive and daring heroine's dream doesn't end at the ball.... Chinese haute couture designer Guo Pei burst onto the international stage when Rihanna famously wore her bright yellow cape to the Met Ball, New York. But what happened next surprised everyone – including Guo Pei herself.

2015 A FLICKERING TRUTH

World Premiere: In Competition Venice Film Festival, Toronto Film Festival, Oscar's Best Foreign Language selection

Additional world film festivals including: Vancouver International Film Festival, Reykjavik International Film Festival, Warsaw Film Festival, 2016: Goteburg Film Festival, Luxembourg City Film Festival, Tempo Dokumentari Festival, Hong Kong International Film Festival, Cinema du Reel, Sydney International Film Festival, New Zealand International Film Festival, Melbourne International Film Festival

What is a country without a past?

As Afghanistan teeters on an unpredictable future, A FLICKERING TRUTH unwraps the world of three dreamers, the dust of 100 years of war and the restoration of 8000 hours of film archive. What surprises will emerge from the cloak of time?

2012 MAORI BOY GENIUS

World Premiere: In Competition, Berlinale Film Festival

Film festivals including: Tromso Film Festival, Sydney Film Festival, NZ Film Festival, Dokufest, Anuu-ru Aboro Film Festival New Caledonia, Melbourne Film Festival, Sheffield Film Festival, Warsaw Film Festival - Winner

Ngaa Rauuira Puumanawawhiti is Maori, 16 and male. The odds are against him to leave school with any qualification, to get a job, to stay out of prison, gangs and crime.

But Ngaa Rauuira is challenging the odds and going beyond New Zealand's shores to do it – he is one of a rare breed to have walked the hallowed halls of the American Ivy League College, Yale University. And he plans to one day be his country's first indigenous Prime Minister.

Maori Boy Genius is a feature-length documentary charting Ngaa Rauuira for a year as he surprises everyone – including himself – and takes his first major political steps.

2008 THE ART STAR AND THE SUDANESE TWINS

World Premiere: Sundance Film Festival, winner Best Editing World Documentary
Sundance Film Festival

Additional world film festivals including: Edinburgh International Film Festival, Hotdocs Toronto, Zurich International Film Festival, Melbourne International Film Festival, Rio de Janeiro International Film Festival

The feature-length Sundance 2008 award-winning documentary charts pop star of the art world, Vanessa Beecroft and her determination to adopt orphaned twins, an intention that bleeds into her art. The film screened in over 100 international film festivals.

2003 BEAUTY WILL SAVE THE WORLD

World Premiere: International Documentary Festival, Amsterdam
Hotdocs Toronto
American Film Institute Festival, Los Angeles

Additional film festivals including: Hotdocs, IDFA, New Zealand Film Festival
New Zealand International Film Festival

KEYNOTE SPEAKING AND MASTERCLASSES have included:

2026

Keynote Speaker, Media Federation of Australia, Sydney Australia 200 audience members

2025

Main Panellist, Breast Cancer Cure Fundraiser, focussing on film YELLOW IS FORBIDDEN

Masterclass, Diocesan School for Girls, Auckland, New Zealand

2024

Masterclass, Dame Jane Campion's A WAVE IN THE OCEAN, Wellington, New Zealand

Keynote Speaker, Finding Inspiration in the Workplace, Capability Group Limited, Auckland, New Zealand

Keynote Speaker, Whakatāne High School 125th Anniversary, New Zealand

2023

Moderator, Women in Film and Television panel on elevating your work with Costume Design featuring internationally award-winning costume designers

Keynote Speaker, Focus on Filmmaker, WIFT, Christchurch, New Zealand

2022

Masterclass, WANDER WONDER RISK – A CURIOUS LIFE, McCann Health Care Advertising Agency, New York

2018

Masterclass PLAYING WITH RISK, Warsaw Film Festival, Poland

2016

Masterclass, MORE THAN JOURNALISTIC COMPETENCY, Dateline TV show SBS, Sydney, Australia

2008

Masterclass, Power Dynamics in Documentary Filmmaking, Stockholm International Film Festival, Sweden

"In her fascinating, briskly paced feature documentary, Pietra Brettkelly tracks the pageant with a sharp eye toward its implications."

LA Weekly

"Pietra Brettkelly's enigmatic rendering ... is not a straightforward artist's profile, political commentary or domestic drama, but a poetic fusion of the three." Variety Magazine



PIETRA BRETTKELLY: PRODUCER/ DIRECTOR/ WRITER



4. ZURICH FILM FESTIVAL

