

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

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INDEPENDENT LENS AND VOCES PREMIERE THE POETIC AND PERSONAL CINEMATIC MEDITATION ON DISPLACEMENT AND INEQUALITY “SKIN OF GLASS” FEBRUARY 17 ON PBS

*A Filmmaker Reckons With Brazil's Inequality When Learning
Unhoused People Occupy Her Father's Architectural
Masterpiece—The Pele de Vidro (“Skin of Glass”)*

(San Francisco, CA) January 2, 2025 — “Skin of Glass,” an award-winning feature documentary, follows filmmaker Denise Zmekhol’s journey as she discovers that her late father’s most celebrated work as an architect, a modernist glass skyscraper in the heart of São Paulo, has become occupied by hundreds of unhoused families. The film will premiere on INDEPENDENT LENS on February 17, 2025.

Denise’s personal quest forces her to face a growing global crisis: one in six people in the world are living on property with no legal rights. The film evolves as a poetic essay on displacement, the concept of home, and the role of architecture in urban life. “Skin of Glass” is a co-presentation of INDEPENDENT LENS and Latino Public Broadcasting’s VOCES.

Filmed over the course of three years, the film features people with a passionate connection to Denise’s father’s work and the fate of the building, including city officials who see the building as a threat to public safety, activists fighting to protect the rights of the residents of the building, and scholars of architecture arguing for preservation. Through their stories, we come to understand the symbolic importance of the building as a reflection of Brazil’s political and economic turmoil over the last half-century.

“This film is a wrenching journey that began with my modest hope to explore my own personal history and my home country, but it transformed into an alarming, cautionary tale for my adopted home in the U.S. and the world,” said filmmaker Denise Zmekhol. “I’m grateful to bring this complex story to the INDEPENDENT LENS audience where they can engage with the many layers of this narrative.”

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“Skin of Glass” debuts on PBS’s INDEPENDENT LENS on February 17, 2025, at 10 p.m. (check local listings). The film will be available to stream on the [PBS app](#).

Roger Zmekhol, a Syrian immigrant to Brazil, was 32 years old when he designed the iconic building. Conceived in the vibrant era of bossa nova and cinema novo, the Skin of Glass (affectionately known as Pele de Vidro) was built in the early days of a dictatorship that would hold power for two decades. It was then abandoned, becoming an empty and decaying home for the impoverished and the unhoused living at the margins of society.-

Through in-depth interactions with the people experiencing homelessness who occupied her father’s building, Denise starts to see “Pele de Vidro” from a larger perspective. The dramatic changes that transform the building reflect Brazil itself during eras of darkness, transformation, and rebirth. The film builds a searing portrait of a country in crisis through the personal story of a father and daughter, and the architectural landscape of São Paulo where their lives, memories, and dreams overlap.

“We’re very pleased to be co-presenting this unique film with INDEPENDENT LENS,” says VOCES executive producer Sandie Viquez Pedlow. “Through the story of her father’s iconic skyscraper, Denise has crafted a documentary that forces us to face how rampant inequality is transforming the landscape of cities throughout the world.”

“Skin of Glass” received Open Call and Diversity Development funding from ITVS and is a co-production with Latino Public Broadcasting. Visit the [“Skin of Glass”](#) page on INDEPENDENT LENS to learn more about the film.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Denise Zmekhol, Producer and Director

Syrian-Brazilian director Denise Zmekhol’s films have been awarded for their visual style and deft storytelling. Her film “Children of the Amazon,” supported by ITVS, aired on PBS. She co-produced the Emmy Award®-winning PBS series DIGITAL JOURNEY and presented the story of her film “Skin of Glass” at Pop-Up Magazine and a TEDWomen conference.

Richard O’Connell, Co-Producer

Richard O’Connell is an Emmy and Peabody Award-winning filmmaker and producer. His film “The Corridor” broadcast on PBS and won the Critics Award

at the Mill Valley Film Festival. In addition to “Skin of Glass,” he is working on a hybrid documentary about the life of a writer and retired bank robber. O’Connell teaches film at Berkeley City College.

Leah Mahan, Co-Producer/Writer

Leah Mahan is a documentary director, producer, writer, and teacher. Her work was nominated by the DGA for Outstanding Directorial Achievement and aired on PBS’s POV. She served as a Fellow at the Sundance Documentary Editing and Story Lab, Sundance Stories of Change, and as a Research Fellow at the Center for Environmental Filmmaking.

Amir Soltani, Co-Producer

Amir Soltani is an Iranian-American storyteller and human rights activist. He has worked across media as an author, journalist, and filmmaker. His graphic novel, *Zahra’s Paradise*, has made publishing history as a real-time, online graphic novel that appears in fifteen languages. He is the executive producer and co-director of “Dogtown Redemption” that aired on INDEPENDENT LENS.

Written, Produced,

Directed, and Narrated By

Denise Zmekhol

Executive Producers

Anne Corcos
Nancy Blachman
Elizabeth King
Kit Miller
Jamie Wolf
Sally Jo Fifer
Sandie Viquez Pedlow
Lois Vossen

Co-Producers

Leah Mahn
Richard O’Connell
Nathalie Seaver
Amir Soltani

ABOUT VOCES

Produced by Latino Public Broadcasting, the acclaimed PBS documentary series [VOCES](#) features the best of Latino arts, culture, and history, and shines a light on current issues that impact Latino Americans. Devoted to exploring the rich diversity of the Latino experience, VOCES presents new and established filmmakers and brings their powerful and illuminating stories to

a national audience—on TV, online, and on the PBS app. VOCES is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. Luis Ortiz is series producer; Sandie Viquez Pedlow is executive producer. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [X](#).

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy® Award-winning PBS documentary series. With founding executive producer Lois Vossen, the series has been honored with 10 Academy Award nominations and features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, INDEPENDENT LENS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Park Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and National Endowment for the Arts. Stream anytime on the PBS app. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens

ABOUT ITVS

Independent Television Services (ITVS) is the largest co-producer of independent documentaries in the United States. For more than 30 years the San Francisco non-profit has funded and partnered with documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning titles and premieres them on our Emmy® Award-winning PBS series, INDEPENDENT LENS. ITVS titles appear on PBS, WORLD, NETA, and can be streamed on various digital platforms including the PBS app. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, The Park Foundation, Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit itvs.org

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