



## **THE ART OF ELYSIUM TURNS CROWDFUNDING INTO NON-PROFIT FILMMAKING ON INDIEGOGO**

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Jennifer Howell, founder of The Art of Elysium (AofE), is taking non-profit filmmaking to new heights with the announcement of a new series of films, written by long-time AofE volunteer and supporter, James Franco, as part of ELYSIUM INDUSTRY, a self-sustaining model for philanthropic filmmaking. The Palo Alto Stories, to be produced in association with Rabbit Bandini and funded entirely online through the world's largest crowdfunding website Indiegogo, is the next major step in the organization's mission to make art its main source of income, and expand its programs in children's hospitals across the country.

"This is completely different than anything we've done before," explains Howell. "The ability to use social media as a way of funding great projects that would not have been made otherwise is extraordinary, but being able to do it for a good cause is exactly what The Art of Elysium is about." The organization, which develops and funds a wide range of artistic workshops that take place in children's hospitals in New York City and Los Angeles, is not only bringing the healing power of art into the lives of children suffering from critical medical conditions, but is changing the way non-profits do business.

ELYSIUM INDUSTRY, which focuses on fundraising in film and theatre arts, is one of several programs aimed at creating artistic projects that not only fund themselves, but support the charity and all of its programs. Other disciplines under The Art of Elysium umbrella include ELYSIUM COLLECTIONS (fashion), ELYSIUM PROJECT (art), and ELYSIUM SESSIONS (music). "We call it the 'FULL-CIRCLE FUNDING MODEL,'" says Howell. "We want our projects to help us expand beyond New York and LA, and with the support of our amazing volunteers, we are taking huge steps in the right direction!"

Armed with a long list of passionate artists like Franco, (who was recently honored with the SPIRIT OF ELYSIUM Award, given to volunteers who show extraordinary commitment to the foundation and its programs), it was only a matter of time before the charity took their full-circle model to the next level.

Then, during one fated conversation with Franco and his producing partner, Vince Jolivette, during this year's Cannes Film Festival, the pieces began to fall into place. "I was explaining what we were doing with ELYSIUM INDUSTRY and some of the ideas we had for possible film projects," explains Howell, "and it was like a light bulb went off." Less than a few days after Howell's plane landed back in LA, her phone rang. On the other end was Franco and Jolivette, with the seed that would grow into an online crowdfunding

campaign, featuring Franco's own work, with all proceeds going to benefit The Art of Elysium and its hospital programs.

"Working with The Art of Elysium has given me the opportunity to share my creativity with hospitalized children, and give them the gift of creativity," said Franco. "These children have inspired me and pushed me as an artist in ways that are truly indescribable." "I have known James for a really long time," adds Howell. "Every time I think that I could not be more proud of him, he surprises me with something else."

In addition to the crowdfunding project, ELYSIUM INDUSTRY is currently in post-production and discussing negotiations for the film FOREVER, which was completed in spring of 2013. The film was directed by Tatia Pilieva, who was the first recipient of the TAHNEE AWARD—a scholarship program named after the first patient the organization was able to help—which grants one lucky filmmaker and AofE volunteer artist the opportunity to make his or her first feature film. As in the case with their new endeavor, all profits from the sale and distribution of the film will go to the charity to support its hospital programs, and ensure the longevity of the TAHNEE AWARD program.

"Tahnee believed in the healing power of art and in the power of storytelling and filmmaking," describes Howell. "It is with great pleasure that The Art of Elysium will carry on her beliefs by annually granting this award to first-time filmmakers who dedicate their time and talent with some of the 40,000 hospitalized children that the organization serves."

Also in line with The Art of Elysium's message of using art as a catalyst for change, the organization hopes to inspire artists themselves to lead by example, and offer their time and talent in service of whatever inspires them. Appropriately, the Palo Alto Stories will be directed by four up-and-coming directors that have not only expressed an interest in making films for the greater good, but will be regular volunteers at AofE hospital programs. "Our model allows those artists already involved to provide additional volunteer opportunities for other artists!" adds Howell.

And with the addition of their new crowdfund(rais)ing campaign, the potential for reaching artists from all over the world is unprecedented. "This is something that we plan on partnering with Rabbit Bandini on for years to come," explains Howell. "Together, we hope to build a new generation of artists that are giving back for the duration of their careers. THAT is definitely my definition of ELYSIUM."

## **ABOUT THE ART OF ELYSIUM**

The Art of Elysium is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization, founded in 1997 by Jennifer Howell, which encourages actors, artists and musicians to voluntarily dedicate their time and talent to children who are battling serious medical conditions. They provide artistic workshops in the following disciplines: acting, art, comedy, fashion, music, radio, songwriting and creative writing. They work with numerous hospitals and hospices throughout Los Angeles, California and began servicing hospitals in New York, New York in 2009.

## **ABOUT FOREVER**

FOREVER, Tatia Pilieva's directorial debut was completed in the spring of 2013 and the organization is planning for a distribution strategy that engages long-term partners for the overall ELYSIUM INDUSTRY program. The film stars Deborah Ann Woll, Luke Grimes, John Diehl, Jill Larson, Shanola Hampton, Rhys Coiro, Seth Gabel, Ioan Gruffudd, Gill Dennis, Jake McLaughlin, Trace Turville, Marianna Palka, AJ DiPersia,

Courtney Halverson, Jayne Taini, Rain Phoenix, Daine Salinger, Bill Kalmenson, Varda Appleton and Tom Everett Scott.

### **ABOUT PALO ALTO STORIES**

Palo Alto Stories is a series of three feature films adapted from the book *Palo Alto* By James Franco. The stories are a compilation of short fictional stories inspired by high school experiences and growing up in Palo Alto, California.

For over a year James Franco has been working closely with *Nina Ljeti*, *Vladimir Bourdeau*, *Bruce Thierry Cheung*, and *Gabrielle Demeestere*, new up and coming filmmakers from NYU, to adapt and develop three Feature length scripts *Memoria*, *Killing Animals*, and *Yosemite*.

### **ABOUT INDIEGOGO**

Indiegogo empowers people around the world to fund what matters to them. As the largest global crowdfunding platform, campaigns have launched from every country around the world with millions of dollars being distributed every week due to contributions made by the Indiegogo community. At its core, Indiegogo is the equal opportunity platform dedicated to democratizing the way people raise funds for any project – creative, entrepreneurial or cause-related. The company was launched in 2008 and is headquartered in San Francisco, with offices in Los Angeles and New York. For more information, visit [www.indiegogo.com](http://www.indiegogo.com), follow us at [www.twitter.com/indiegogo](http://www.twitter.com/indiegogo) and [www.facebook.com/indiegogo](http://www.facebook.com/indiegogo).