

BROMLEY

LIGHT AFTER DARK

FEATURE DOCUMENTARY | 94 MINUTES
DIRECTED BY SEAN McDONALD

Cathartic
Pictures 12:01 Productions





Logline

David Bromley was a lost soul, until he found that art appeased the voices in his head and let him see beauty in the world again. Art saved his life – art, and his wife Yuge.

Tagline

Less is more, but it's never enough.

Synopsis

Bromley: Light after Dark is an exploration of pain, love, and creativity. When David Bromley discovered that art appeased the voices in his head, he threw his whole being into the pursuit of bringing beauty to life.

With intimate access to the world of this prominent Australian artist, we peel back the layers of anxiety, phobias, and self-destruction to embrace the humour and energy that lies beneath. The story of David's journey wouldn't be complete without his wife Yuge. It's through this intense partnership that we witness the precariousness of David's world and his state of mind. We follow the Bromleys as they live their authentic lives, while interviews with friends, critics and musicians add insight on mental health, the creative process, and the commercialisation of art.

Ultimately, this is a love story for the ages and a stirring exploration of life and creativity. As David himself says, "art saved my life". But that's just the beginning of this story...

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Bromley: Light after Dark is the first feature documentary from photographer turned filmmaker Sean McDonald. As photographer to iconic and prolific Australian artist David Bromley, Sean had unprecedented access to tell the Bromley's story.

“I would come away from a photography session with David, conscious that I'd had the most insightful, deep philosophical conversation that I've ever had in my life. I felt like I was walking away with all these new life lessons.”

“And that's where the idea for this project started,” says Sean.

More rock and roll documentary than art biopic, Sean takes us deep into the life of the Bromleys, from late night painting sessions, meltdowns, and road trips to candid conversations about love, art and again, art.

What makes this film distinctly authentic is that it's told largely in observational documentary style as we witness the Bromleys live their chaotic, yet charmed lives. As Yuge puts it, “There's not really any distinction between work life, family life, real life. A typical day for us is madness.” While Wolfmother's Andrew Stockdale sheds further light saying that the Bromleys live their life like it's “a teenage sleepover that has gone on for 50 years.”

We explore David Bromley's singular creative process, his mental health journey, and the claims that his art is too commercial, through interviews with musicians, friends, and colleagues.

The documentary leaves no stone unturned as critics give frank insight into the polarising nature of David's work. As art writer Andrew Frost puts it, “He's achieved a Warhol-level of ubiquity and that I think in many ways has been both his triumph and his downfall.” Yet close friend and actor David Wenham sees the gift in David's prolific output. “He is this uncontrollable creative force that just keeps coming and coming and coming.”

The score features both original compositions by Nick Batterham, and a playlist by friends and collaborators – music is central to the Bromley world. “I just can't move a brush without music, my instrument is the brush. When you are younger people say you march to the beat of your own drum. Over time you find other people with a similar rhythm,” says David.

Art and collaboration are omnipresent in the film, even in the filmmaking. Animations by Mr Fox helped breathe life into some of his paintings and Oh Yeah Wow embraced the lighthouse allegorically for David's troubled mind.

The theme of overcoming the negative voices in our heads drives the narrative and visuals throughout the film. We see a two-time suicide survivor who has learnt not to only overcome his demons, but to see them as a springboard to something more meaningful. Energising, surprising, and always entertaining, *Light after Dark* will take the audience on the journey of a man who found himself on a precipice and through love, art, and sheer resolve, made his way home.





DIRECTORS STATEMENT

Bromley: *Light After Dark*

By Sean McDonald

Everyone has an opinion on David Bromley.

I'd heard all the throwaway rumours about David – that he's a sell-out, or his paintings are just decorative. That he probably doesn't even paint anymore, or that he paints too much... And then I saw people from all walks of life overcome with joy when receiving one of his artworks.

What makes this artist so polarising?

I spent four years getting to know the Bromleys' world by photographing various projects, and in the process, I developed a close friendship with David and Yuge. We shared many late nights that would often end up in moving conversations about life's hardships, as well as life's beauty. This is where I learnt how powerful and unique David's story is, and that it cannot be told through still images alone. David is an unstoppable, creative wrecking ball, and I knew that a film rooted in observational documentary would be the best way to show this.

The uniqueness of this story lies within David's past. How do you turn your life around when all you feel is darkness? The conversation around mental health is taking place more frequently today, though stigma still surrounds sufferers. This story offers a deep insight into David's inner life and his road to overcoming these challenges.

As David himself says, "art saved my life". But that's just the beginning of this story. David upends the art world's limitations on what an artist should be, and its perception of commercial success.

My vision for this film is for it to be a relentless exploration of life. A story of a lost soul being found again, a story of overcoming an intense darkness to not only find beauty in the world, but beauty within oneself too.

There will never be another David Bromley, an Australian treasure that audiences are bound to fall in love with and be inspired by. An artist who demonstrates why we shouldn't fear obsession, whose search for beauty is his life's work. Most importantly BROMLEY is a story of love prevailing over darkness.

*"I look at the value of art by imagining that it wasn't around.
There's the value of it.*

*It's like water, you know?
Or air. I couldn't breathe without it."*

- David Bromley

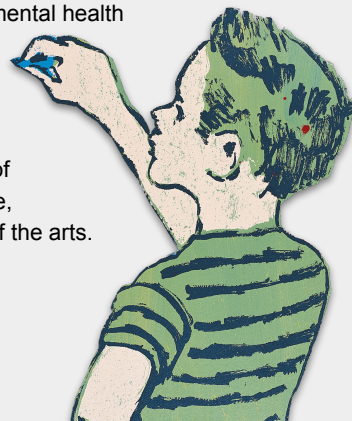


MENTAL HEALTH

“They called Matisse the painter of light, but he said it took a lot of darkness for him to be the painter of light. And I want to be a bit of a painter of joy and light, but I don’t just want it to come from darkness.” – David Bromley

Bromley: Light After Dark seeks to give insight to the healing power of art and creativity. In David, we discover someone who clawed his way back from attempted suicide to become a thriving artist. Every year, 1 in 5 people experience mental illness in Australia, with 75% of mental health problems emerging before the age of 25. By exploring the positive effect art can have on our lives and communities, we aim to inspire creative exploration in those suffering from mental illness.

We would like to see a world where people living with a mental health illness can find comfort and healing in art and creativity. Through the protagonist we witness the wisdom of a two-time suicide survivor, who has learned to not only overcome his demons, but to see them as a springboard to something more meaningful. With this representation of a positive mental health story we hope to inspire, educate, and increase support and visibility to the healing power of the arts.



Editor Delaney Murphy was an integral part of the team exploring this core theme. "One of my favourite lines in the film is 'as the cycle can spiral down, the cycle can spiral up.' Meaning that if you can manage to claw yourself out of the depths of despair, you've probably had to have made yourself a better person in the process. So there is like a flip side to that darkness, even if it's hard to see when you are in it."

Sean says he found David's honesty about mental health and his journey to healing to be unique. "I felt his story could bring a lot of hope to other people, to navigate the darkness they might be feeling."

"One thing I've learned from talking with David and in general, is that everyone's pain or mental health journey is uniquely theirs," says Sean. "David has experienced significant pain in his life, and he's had some really heavy traumas. He grew up in an era where if you talked about mental health, you were weak, you were soft, you were told to harden up."

"I can't imagine how alone and hopeless he must have felt at times. Art gave him a footing to create a life where he could feel fulfilled and find happiness, and all those things that he needed in his life to feel purposeful."

Author John Byron reflects on David's ongoing commitment to his mental health "I don't think he finds life easy, but he's determined not to succumb to that, you know, it's part of his process about rising to the occasion on a daily basis."



THE ART

“When I first started making art, you know, decorative – bad word, nostalgic – bad word, happiness – bad word, craft ... and I just took those and built a career.”

David Bromley’s most popular artworks to date are his iconic *Female Nude* series and the *Boy’s Own* works. The former combines the tradition of portraiture with a contemporary view of femininity to produce strong, seductive pieces. With bold colours contrasting between subject and background, along with heavy layering and texturing, the *Female Nude* works offer a refreshing change from conventional female portraits.

The *Boy’s Own* series draws inspiration from *Boy’s Own* Annuals and vintage magazines to present the excitement and adventure of childhood. Vivacious colours and figurative expressionism are used to inject the works with energy and depict the intensity of adolescent life. A sense of nostalgia and adventure coupled with Pop Art symbolism infuses the works with innocence and the feelings of joy often associated with the early years of life.

“I think when you get to know what drives an artist, it changes the way you see their work. And I love the boldness of David’s work,” says Sean.

Artist Steve Leadbeater describes what makes David’s work so unique. “Doing layers isn’t so profound but to have the balls to paint almost illustrative on top of that is something. You’ve already got something going on that’s quite powerful and then you do another layer because you can and then, you know, you’ve got a Bromley.”



“It’s really hard sometimes to be profound through beauty.”



BROMLEY

THE CASTLEMAINE GAOL

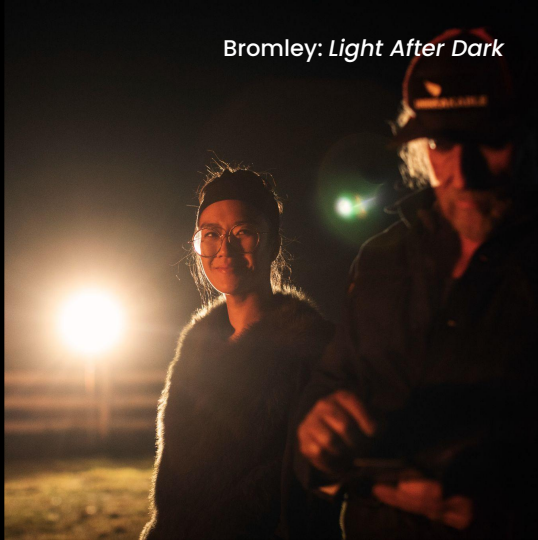
The Bromley Collection Museum at the Old Castlemaine Gaol is the couple's love letter to all the artists and collections that they have had the good fortune to come across, and it's a defining project in the documentary.

Their desire was to shift the axis of what the gaol was known for. From a place of despair, sadness, and trauma it is transformed into a place that exudes a sense of life, joy, and art. The constantly evolving collection of wall art, sculpture and objects illustrates the obsessive and compulsive nature of creation.

As musician Julia Stone reflects, "David has taken a place that really represents the chaos and the confusion of the human mind and put flowers in there. The first thing you see are these kinds of incredible colourful creatures everywhere and it was just this, from the dark to the light, walking through those two front gates."

A privately owned and run museum, the collection is deeply personal and diverse. It is not the work of a curator, but rather, the rattling minds of two people who are purely and simply consumed with art and creative output.





Bromley: Light After Dark



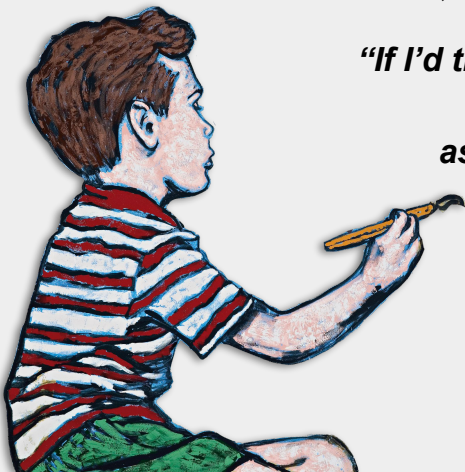
THE MAKING OF

Sean estimates he filmed over 80 to 100 days, which included navigating lockdowns across the pandemic. It was in mid-2018 that Sean put the idea to David and Yuge Bromley to make a documentary on their life. “It’s been just over five years now,” says Sean, “which certainly wasn’t how long I anticipated it would be. Luckily, I didn’t know at the time how much goes into making a film or we wouldn’t be here today.”

Working with David’s hyperactive mind meant that timing was critical for Sean. He had to find moments to have the difficult conversations, particularly when discussing David’s past struggles with mental health.

“You’ve got to have those questions ready for when there’s a quiet moment in the day or you catch him alone at the canvas. Learning how to bring that out of David when he likes to drive the conversation was a challenge. I had to let him drive, let him go down these tangents, which often led to beautiful moments, but also be able to redirect him when needed.

***“If I’d tried to make this film in 12 months,
it would have been nowhere near
as intimate, deep and multi-layered.”***



Producer Cathy talks of Sean’s capacity to find the story within the material, and to have the hard conversations when there were parts of the story that David found difficult to discuss. “Particularly towards the end, there were things that we felt still needed to be covered and Sean was able to go back and get those interviews and the insight we needed based on the trust that they’d built.”

David says, “The documentary has been in the hands of some people that I think have shown us probably more respect than just about anybody else has given us. It’s so exciting that at the same time, we get to share our life.”

In 2020/21, with hours of footage in the can, Sean gathered a team around him. Clare Plueckhahn came on as Producer and brought Cathy Rodda in to help with completion financing. Delaney Murphy joined as Editor and together they wrangled Sean’s four-hour long assembly. With a new two-hour cut, Madman Entertainment saw the potential in the film and came on as distributor for Australia and New Zealand. Private investment, donations through Documentary Australia, and investment from Vic Screen completed the financing of the film.

Editor Delaney Murphey reflects, “The challenge in documentary is that you’re working with a lot of footage, and then distilling someone’s life story down to 90 minutes. I always feel a big responsibility to the doco subject to do them justice. When they watch the film, I want them to feel like they’re being represented in an authentic way.”

“Originally, the Castlemaine Gaol project was to act as the spine of the film, but lockdowns delayed progress. In the meantime, Sean and Delaney worked with supervising editor Sara Edwards to craft the structure of the film, which helped us strengthen our core themes of mental health and commercialisation in art.” says Clare.

WHY SEE THE FILM?

"If you don't like David's art, you should see this film," says Clare Plueckhahn. "You might still not like his art at the end of the film, but you will respect his artistic process and have a better understanding of why he creates the art that he does."

This is a film for the critics as much as it is for the fans.

"We didn't just want it to be an artist bio," says Sean. "The film is so much more than a story about an artist in the art scene. It's a way to have a discussion on mental health and society, creativity, and a way that life can be lived."

"There's never going to be another David Bromley," says Sean. "He is a unique and playful character. Just observing him for 90 minutes is going to be entertaining. Wherever you are in life, if things are going well or if you're at a low point, this film will fill you with a bit of hope."

"And it goes into some much broader themes about love, beauty, and finding a life that leaves you feeling fulfilled. You walk away from watching this film feeling like you can do more and that the world's there for the taking."



MAKING AN IMPACT

A social impact campaign is planned to launch with the release of the film, working with impact partners and into education.

OUR CAMPAIGN AIM

- Engender a better understanding of issues faced by people with mental illness, leading to greater empathy and support
- Inspire people who are struggling with mental health to embrace their creativity to help improve their wellbeing
- Raise awareness of the healing power of creativity and the arts and its community worth
- Amplify key messaging of our impact partners.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Throughout our campaign, including via social media, we will share resources and messaging from the film working closely with our impact partners – to inform, encourage support, and highlight opportunities to participate and/or to donate
- Within our theatrical release, we plan special event screenings that feature Q&As with David Bromley and Sean McDonald, allowing in-person conversation, inspiration, and promotional/ outreach opportunities
- In promoting the film, we anticipate good national publicity across all media with appearances by David & Yuge and/or Sean.
- Following our theatrical release we envision community impact screenings with special interest groups, again including Q&As.
- We are creating educational resources for use in schools and tertiary institutions and will be working with ATOM (Australian Teachers of Media) to promote the film to teachers, students and to work our content into the curriculum nationally.

CAST

DAVID BROMLEY

David Bromley was a high school dropout, a surf bum, and a two-time suicide survivor when he discovered art. It saved his life. Born in 1960 in Sheffield, England, David Bromley is a prolific Australian artist best known for his painting and sculpture, in particular his portraits and his paintings of children, birds, butterflies, and female nudes.

After beginning his career in Adelaide as a potter, David emerged on the Australian art scene as a self-taught painter in the 1980s, and has since been named one of Australian Art Collector's 50 most collectable artists.

Bromley is a six-time Archibald Prize finalist and has had more than 30 national solo exhibitions since the beginning of his career. His works have been shown in Tokyo, Paris, London, South Africa, Singapore, and New York. They also appear in many private and corporate collections across Australia including the state galleries of Western Australia and South Australia.

Increasingly in demand as a portrait artist, Bromley has painted several Australian celebrities such as actor Hugo Weaving, singer Kylie Minogue, model Megan Gale and arts patron Kim Bonython. In recent years, Bromley has diversified his work to include furniture and interiors. In 2014 he founded Bromley & Co with wife Yuge Bromley. In 2019 they acquired the Castlemaine Goal, with the vision to create an arts precinct.



CAST

YUGE BROMLEY

Born in Beijing and raised in New Zealand, Yuge is David Bromley's most passionate collaborator. Despite a career change from lawyer to fashion designer being seen by some as an unusual fork in the road, creative pursuits are in Yuge's mind the perfect path to walk.

After years of finding her wardrobe increasingly filled with designs that were her own and with craft always having been a constant throughout her life, a thirst for creative adventure is now what Yuge strives for.

These days, Yuge's greatest passions lie in building an incredible team and work environment, laying foundations to achieve remarkable outcomes in the art studio and being a championer for bringing art to broader audiences.



FEATURED INTERVIEWS

- David Wenham – Actor
- Chris Cheney – Musician
- David Fox – Philanthropist
- Vincent Fantuazzo – Artist
- Steve Leadbeater – Artist
- Kathrin Longhurst – Artist
- Andrew Frost – Art Critic
- Mark Holsworth – Art Critic
- Liz Walker – Artist
- Mark Read – Gallerist
- Melissa Cahill - Art Curator and Writer
- Tahlia Stanton – Artist
- Mic Porter – Artist
- Lucks – Artist
- Gore – Artist
- Datsun Tran – Artist
- Julia Stone – Musician
- Kate Ceberano – Musician
- Donavon Frankenreiter – Musician
- Andrew Stockdale – Musician
- Jeff Makin – Artist



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Bromley: Light After Dark



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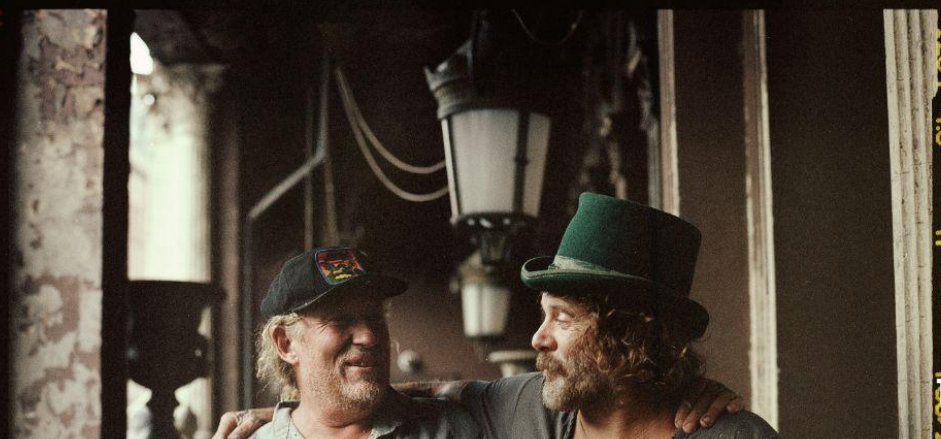
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CREW



SEAN MCDONALD - DIRECTOR

Sean McDonald is a photographer, filmmaker and *Light after Dark* is his debut feature documentary.

With a background in commercial photography and cinematography, Sean's personal work has a focus on visceral documentations. Alongside his wife Kathryn Vinella, he has produced and exhibited two photography books; *New York* (2016) & *Education is Freedom; A girls life in rural Zimbabwe* (2018).

It was these projects that drove Sean to explore the craft of filmmaking further. He has since co-directed the music video *Broke Days Party Nights* for Australian artist Ecce Vandal that was shot in New York (2017), collaborated with Melbourne musicians to create *The Lawn Sessions* (2020), a film series that uses music as a vehicle to help empower men to have conversations around their mental health, and worked as director of photography on TV documentary *Kick Like Tayla* (2022).

After 6 years of building an artist - photographer relationship with David Bromley, Sean began work on *Light After Dark* in 2018. With over 50 days of interviews and footage already captured of Bromley and his family, Sean had a unique position to create a powerful biopic of one of Australia's most prolific and memorable artists.



CLARE PLUECKHAHN - PRODUCER

Clare is a director and producer with experience in scripted drama and documentary.

She has directed *Neighbours* (2020), 2nd Unit on the reimagined mini-series *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (2018), and international comedy feature *Ricky Stanicky* (2023). Most recently she has produced the feature documentary *Bromley: Light After Dark* (2023).

Having started her career as a photographer, Clare has an eye for the visually interesting and the cinematic which is evident in her award-winning solo exhibition *Running with Wolves*. She fell into producing through her love of surfing, beginning with the coming-of-age feature documentary *First Love* (2011), followed by on *Uncharted Waters* (2013) where she was Director of Photography.

A strong storyteller with an excellent cinematic eye, her on set experience and technical skills add depth and breadth to her abilities as a producer and director.



CATHY RODDA - PRODUCER

Cathy is a Creative Producer known for international co-productions such as the Finnish/German/Australian sci-fi hit *Iron Sky* (Berlinale 2012) and Danish/German/ Australian action comedy *Ved Verdens Ende* (2009).

Her first film, the multi award-winning *Unfinished Sky*, premiered at Toronto International Film Festival and was the 4th highest grossing Australian film of 2008. Most recently she produced talent accelerator zombie western *Bullets for the Dead* (2015), line produced Mark Hartley/Tony Ginnane thriller *Girl at the Window* (2022) and produced feature documentary *Bromley: Light after Dark* (2023).

From 2015-19, Cathy covered drama series, features, animation, documentaries, and VR as Senior Manager of Production Investment at Film Victoria (now Vic Screen). She returned to producing in 2020, rebooting her production company Cathartic Pictures where she is developing a slate of features and series with a focus on diverse storytelling and environmental and social impact.

CREW



DELANEY MURPHY - EDITOR

Delaney is an award-winning freelance film editor based in Melbourne, Australia. In 2020 she edited the short film *Zef* (directed by Jessica Barclay Lawton) which premiered on Nowness and amassed over 3 million views.

Continuing her collaboration with Lawton she went on to edit *The Sweetness* which premiered at Sydney Film Festival in 2022. Her other short film work has screened at festivals including Aesthetic Short Film Festival, Outfest Los Angeles, St Kilda Film Festival, Melbourne Queer Film Festival, Melbourne Documentary Festival and ReelGood Film Festival. Most recently she was nominated for the Most Exciting Off-Screen Talent at ReelGood Film Festival 2023.

She is currently editing several feature documentary projects that are in post-production and due to release in the coming year.



SARA EDWARDS - SUPERVISING EDITOR

Sara has worked as an editor for over 25 years in a variety of genres, specialising in documentary films.

In 2019 she won an Australian Screen Editors Ellie Award for her work on *Gatwick – Last Chance Hotel*, which was also nominated for Best Short Documentary in the 2019 AACTA Awards. In 2007 she was nominated for best editing of *Not Quite Hollywood in the AFI/AACTA Awards*, which went on to win Best Feature Documentary.

Beginning her editing career in television commercials and music videos, Sara has edited over sixty film clips for bands such as Powderfinger, The Living End, Kasey Chambers, Sophie Monk, and the Aria award-winning videos for Madison Avenue. She has also worked on several television series, short films, and animated programs.



NICK BATTERHAM - COMPOSER / SOUND DESIGNER

Nick Batterham is an AFI/AACTA award nominated sound designer and ARIA nominated musician. He has created sound design for feature films including *Bromley: Light After Dark* (2023), *The Plains* (2022), *All This Mayhem* (2014) and *Lionel* (2009), which was nominated for an AFI award for best sound in a documentary.

Most recently, Nick is collaborated with visual artist Rone, composing and sound designing Rone's *Time* (2022-23) installation at Melbourne's iconic Flinders Street Station, which was experienced by over 100,000 visitors. Nick also collaborated on Rone's previous projects, *Rone In Geelong* (2021) and *Empire* (2019).

Throughout the 1990s, Nick toured extensively as guitarist and co-songwriter with indie-rock band The Earthmen. Their debut album received an ARIA nomination for best debut album in 1997. Nick is guitarist with the band Cordrazine and recently launched his sixth solo album with a performance at Melbourne Recital Centre.



CAST & CREW
STILLS

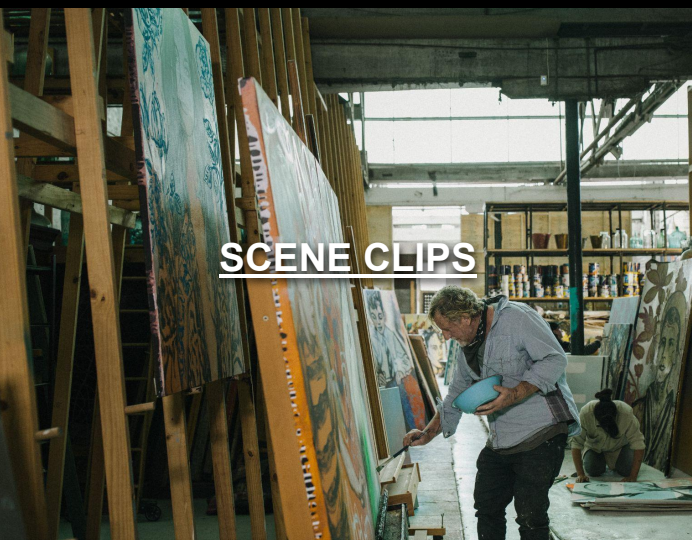


PRODUCTION STILLS

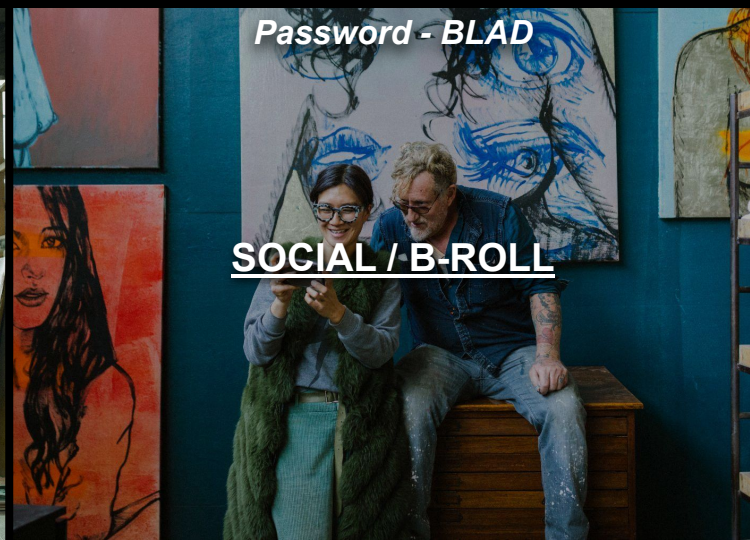
ASSETS



CAST
INTERVIEWS



SCENE CLIPS



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SOCIAL / B-ROLL



CREW
INTERVIEWS

BROMLEY

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4k DCP / 24fps / 16:9
(With a 2:35:1 Letterbox)

Language: English

Sound: 5.1



VICSCREEN



MADMAN



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