

MEDIA RELEASE

EVENT: DOXA Documentary Film Festival 2009

DATES: May 22 – 31, 2009

VENUES: Empire Granville 7 Theatre (855 Granville St), Pacific Cinémathèque (1131 Howe St), Vancity Theatre (1181 Seymour St)

ADMISSION: Opening Night Film: \$15

Single Tickets: \$10 plus one-time \$2 Membership

Full Festival Passes (includes Membership): \$125

TICKETS: DOXA website (www.doxafestival.ca)

Videomatica (1855 West 4th Ave.)

Biz Books (302 West Cordova St.)

Bibliophile (2010 Commercial Dr.)

INFORMATION: www.doxafestival.ca or 604.646.3200

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DOXA Documentary Film Festival's Opening and Closing Films Explore Life-Changing Events

Vancouver, BC – Among the 75 films that DOXA will screen this year, the Opening and Closing Films take us through a spectrum of life-changing experiences. From the poignant Opening Film *Inside Hana's Suitcase* by Canadian Larry Weinstein, to the sublime Closing Film *Act of God* by Canadian Jennifer Baichwal, these insightful documentaries show us how lives can change in an instant.

One day Fumiko Ishioka, the coordinator of the Tokyo Holocaust Education Centre, received a battered suitcase with the name Hana Brady painted on the front. She had no idea that this suitcase would set her on a journey that would change her life and the lives of thousands of children around the world. Ishioka's quest to put a face to a name on an old suitcase took her to the Czech Republic, where Hana was born. When the Nazis invaded, Hana's parents were imprisoned and she was eventually sent to Auschwitz. Fumiko's search eventually led to the camp, where Hana's name was marked with a single check mark, meaning she had died there. But just above Hana's name, another name was inscribed: George Brady, Hana's brother, who had survived the war. Weinstein's stunning new documentary brings Hana and George Brady's remarkable story to life. Narrated by children in Japan and Toronto, who have been moved by Hana and George's experiences, *Inside Hana's Suitcase* is told with immense grace. Hana's suitcase is an enduring symbol of love and courage, and a potent reminder for the need to stand up to intolerance and hatred.

A meditation on the random act of being struck by lightning, Baichwal's latest film *Act of God* explores the meaning of life and sometimes the lack thereof. When writer Paul Auster was 14 years old, he stood beside his friend Ralph as he was struck and killed by lightning. The film explores not only the phenomena of lightning and the experiences of people who lived through being struck (and those who did not), but poses metaphysical questions that have confounded human beings since the beginning of conscious thought. To an ex-marine who was declared clinically dead for twenty-eight minutes, after being struck by lightning through the telephone, it was a means of spiritual rebirth. "Lightning and change go hand in hand, and in a single moment I was changed," he says. "It changed my whole way of looking at the world," says Paul Auster, who credits his experience as the reason he became a writer. "The mechanics of reality, there's no meaning to this, it's absolutely meaningless, yet this is the way the world works."

Both *Inside Hana's Suitcase* and *Act of God* explore the tragedy of circumstance and the joy of rebirth.

DOXA Documentary Film Festival runs May 22-31, 2009. Tickets to the Opening Night screening of *Inside Hana's Suitcase* at the Empire Granville Theatre are \$15; and \$35 including the Opening Night Party at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Single tickets for all other screenings are \$10 each plus one-time \$2 Membership. Festival Passes allow access to all films except Opening Night and are available for \$125. Tickets and Passes are available at Bibliophile Bookshop, Videomatica, Biz Books and online at www.doxafestival.ca. For further information, call DOXA at 604-646-3200.

DOXA is presented by the Documentary Media Society, a Vancouver-based non-profit, charitable society.

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