

Tanya Selvaratnam



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TANYA SELVARATNAM writer/producer/actor
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Tanya Selvaratnam is a writer and an Emmy-nominated and multiple Webby-winning producer with more than twenty years of experience working in the areas of arts and social justice.

Born in Sri Lanka and raised in Long Beach, CA, Selvaratnam is based in New York City and Portland, Oregon. With the artist Laurie Anderson and the producer Laura Michalchyshyn, she is a Co-Founder of The Federation: a coalition of artists, organizations, and allies committed to keeping cultural borders open and showing how art unites us. She is also a board member and advisor of For Freedoms, co-founded by Eric Gottesman and Hank Willis Thomas, to spark civic engagement and public discourse through the arts. Most recently, she has been producing for The Vision & Justice Project, founded by Sarah Lewis; The Shed, the new NYC multi-arts center; GLAMOUR Women of the Year; and UNSTOPPABLE ART/Planned Parenthood. Since 2007, she has been a producer with Aubin Pictures (founded by Catherine Gund). For nine years, she was the Communications and Special Projects Officer for the Rubell Family Collection/Contemporary Arts Foundation, based in Miami, FL.

Selvaratnam's career in the arts and social justice began with her work assisting Anna Deavere Smith on the development of *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* about the human toll of the L.A. riots, and with her position as a youth organizer on the steering committee of the NGO Forum/Fourth World Conference on Women in China in 1995. In addition, she was an organizer and researcher for the World Health Organization's Kobe Conference on Women and Tobacco in 1999.

Selvaratnam's producing range includes films, branded content, live events, and exhibitions. She has produced work by Gabri Christa, Lisa Cortés, Liz Garbus, Catherine Gund, Le Tigre and Laura Parnes, Tiffany Shlain, Mickalene Thomas, Lucy Walker, Carrie Mae Weems, and Jed Weintrob, among others. Her films have played on HBO, IFC, PBS, Starz, and the Sundance Channel; and have premiered at Sundance, Berlin, Tribeca, and SXSW. Selvaratnam has worked on projects at the Guggenheim Museum, Kennedy Center, The Kitchen, Park Avenue Armory, PS122, and Rubell Family Collection.

She is the author of *THE BIG LIE* (Prometheus) and the forthcoming *Assume Nothing* (Henry Holt); and her writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Vogue*, *Glamour*, *CNN*, *McSweeney's*, *Artsy*, and more. She has been quoted in publications around the world including *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The New Yorker*, *CNN*, *NBC News*, *Hyperallergic*, *Slate*, *artnet*, *ARTNews*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Artforum*, *Cosmo*, *Redbook*, *Metro*, *Village Voice*, *PAPER*, *New York*, *Corriere della Serra*, *Die Zeit*, and *The Globe and Mail*. She

has been a featured guest on CNN, MSNBC, Al Jazeera, NPR, WNYC, KCRW, Sirius XM, and CBS Radio News.

Selvaratnam has participated in panels and conferences around the world, including various United Nations and World Health Organization events as well as the Aspen Ideas Festival, Brooklyn Book Festival, and Skoll World Forum. She has spoken on a variety of subjects, including the rights and safety of women and children, and the interplay of art and democracy. She has also conducted workshops with students of all ages, from elementary school through graduate school. She has been a fellow at Yaddo and Blue Mountain Center, and has received grants from the Ford Foundation, The Ettinger Foundation, and the MAP Fund.

She has served on the boards of the Third Wave Fund, For Freedoms, Boom Arts, The Wooster Group, and Groundswell Community Mural Project; and is an advisor to The DO School, a Germany-based and internationally focused creative educational organization that offers learning experiences to generate global impact.

Selvaratnam received her graduate and undergraduate degrees in Chinese language and legal history from Harvard University. Her Masters thesis on women's organizations in post-Tiananmen China was published in the *Journal of Law and Politics*.

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CURRENT

- Producer, The Vision & Justice Project, 2019-
- Producer, The Shed, 2018-2019
- Executive Video Producer/Director, *GLAMOUR* Women of the Year, 2017-
- Project Lead/Executive Producer, UNSTOPPABLE ART/Planned Parenthood, 2017-
- Co-Founder, The Federation, 2017-
- Producer, Aubin Pictures: 2007-

PAST

- Communications and Special Projects Officer, Rubell Family Collection/Contemporary Arts Foundation: 2008-2017
- Producer, Di San Luca Films: 2007-2018
- Benefit Producer, Yaddo: 2015
- Gala Producer, PS122: 2014 & 2015
- Producer, HERE Arts Center: 2009-2013
- Benefit Producer, The Wooster Group: 2007
- Research Associate and Conference Assistant Coordinator, World Health Organization: 1999-2003
- Producer, Internet Stories Productions, 1998-2003
- Special Projects Coordinator, Ms. Foundation for Women: 1996-9
- Co-Coordinator, Youth Tent; Producer, Youth Arts and Culture Events, Fourth World Conference on Women: 1995
- Assistant, Anna Deavere Smith: 1993-4
- Program Coordinator, Center for Chinese Legal Studies, Columbia Law School: 1993-4

EDUCATION

Harvard University, M.A., Regional Studies – East Asia, 1996

- Focus: Chinese language and the history of law
- Thesis Topic: the repression of women’s organizations in post-Tiananmen China
- Publication: “Backseat Driver: Steering Chinese Women’s Voices Through the 1990s,” *Journal of Law and Politics*, University of Virginia Press

Harvard College, B.A., East Asian Languages & Civilizations, 1992

- Focus: Chinese language and history
- Thesis Topic: the interplay of law and practice in the lives of widows in the Qing Dynasty

LANGUAGES

- Majored in Mandarin Chinese (work/study in China, 1987, 1988, 1993, 1995)
- Studied Classical Chinese and Vietnamese for two years
- Studied Spanish for six years (and live/study in Cuba, 2015/16)
- Studied Latin and Greek for six years

SKILLS

- Organizing large-scale convenings
- Producing films, shows, events, and benefits
- Building and supervising teams
- Developing and managing budgets
- Fundraising
- Developing timelines and monitoring benchmarks
- Communications and public relations
- Social media strategy
- Writing
- Public speaking
- Mentoring
- Connecting

PRODUCER

Films/TV/PSAs (Select List)

1. “AGGIE” – a documentary feature in post-production about the collector/philanthropist Agnes Gund and her lifelong commitment to art and justice. Director: Catherine Gund. Intended release: early 2020.
2. “UNSTOPPABLE” – a video series for Planned Parenthood. Online release: January 2018-April 2019. Webby Award for best digital activism project and Brand Film Festival Award for best cinematic storytelling in short-form content.
3. *GLAMOUR* Women of the Year – series of videos on honorees such as Samantha Bee, Viola Davis, Senator Kamala Harris, Patty Jenkins, Nicole Kidman, Solange Knowles, Janelle Monae, Chrissy Teigen, and Representative Maxine Waters. Event and online release: November 2017, November 2018.
4. “#StandUpForUs” – PSA of a non-partisan letter to Congress to stand up for civil liberties and protect vulnerable peoples. Featuring activists, faith leaders, and celebrities including Sally Field, Bishop Gene Robinson, Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, Keegan-Michael Key, Imam Khalid Latif, Ai-jen Poo, Steve Buscemi, and Yasmeen Hassan. Director: Liz Garbus. Online release: January 2017.
5. “Born to Fly” – documentary feature about daredevil choreographer Elizabeth Streb. Director: Catherine Gund. World Premiere: SXSW Film Festival, 2014; Theatrical Premiere: Film Forum, September 2014; Television Premiere: PBS’s Independent Lens, 2015; Emmy nomination for Best Arts & Culture Programming.
6. “Happy Birthday to a Beautiful Woman” – documentary short by visual artist Mickalene Thomas about her mother and muse, Sandra Bush. Director: Mickalene Thomas. Television Premiere: HBO, February 2014. Audience Award, Black Star Film Festival, 2014.
7. “Beginnings” – short film series of 13 episodes about creative leaders including Yoko Ono, Marjane Satrapi, and Christian Louboutin. Director: Chiara Clemente. Television Premiere: Sundance Channel, Season One in October 2010 and Season Two in March 2012. WEBBY Award for Best Online Documentary Series.
8. “MADE HERE” – HERE Arts Center’s 4-season documentary series of 50 short episodes and a website featuring about 100 NYC-based performing artists including Joan Jonas, Bill T. Jones, Cherry Jones, and Philip Seymour Hoffman. Director: Chiara Clemente.

Online launch from May 2010 through December 2013. Television Premiere: NYC Life (Channel 25), beginning May 2011.

9. “What’s on Your Plate?” – documentary feature about children and food politics. Director: Catherine Gund. World Premiere: Berlin International Film Festival, 2009; Television Premiere: Discovery’s Planet Green, 2010.
10. “Our City Dreams” – documentary feature about five decades of women artists, including Swoon, Ghada Amer, Kiki Smith, Marina Abramovic, and Nancy Spero. Director: Chiara Clemente. World Premiere: Art Basel, 2008; Theatrical Premiere: Film Forum, February 2009; Television Premiere: Sundance Channel, Spring 2009.

Events and Shows (Select List)

1. “Art and Civil Disobedience with Boots Riley” – event. The Shed, New York, NY, May 10, 2019.
2. “POWERPLAY” – theatrical production. The Shed, New York, NY, May 18-19, 2019.
3. The Federation’s Art Action Day – series of events. Various venues, New York, NY, January 20, 2018.
4. Rubell Family Collection Annual Exhibition Opening – event. Miami, FL, 2008-2017. As the Communications and Special Projects Officer, Selvaratnam worked behind the scenes on the openings during Art Basel Miami Beach of 9 exhibitions, including “NO MAN’S LAND,” “30 Americans,” and “28 Chinese,” and on events for touring exhibitions, including at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. She handled public relations year-round and liaised with dozens of artists affiliated with the Collection.
5. “Elijah Green” – theatrical production. The Kitchen, New York, NY, March 2016. Playwright/Director: Andrew Ondrejcek. In collaboration with the Ethical Fashion Initiative. Recipient of a NEFA National Theater Project Grant.
6. Annual Benefit for Yaddo – event. Tribeca Rooftop, New York, NY, June 2015. Hosted by Steve Buscemi and Kate Valk, honoring Laurie Anderson, featuring appearances by Ayad Akhtar, Eisa Davis, Young Jean Lee, and Joseph Keckler. Most financially successful Yaddo benefit in at least fifteen years.
7. Spring Gala for Performance Space 122 – event. Capitale, New York, NY, April 2015. Hosted by Alan Cumming, honoring Claire Danes, featuring appearances by Mandy Patinkin, Peaches, AndrewAndrew, and Faye Driscoll. Raised more than double the revenue of any previous year.
8. “CMW Live from the Guggenheim” – series of events. Guggenheim Museum, NY, April 2014. Featuring panels, performances, and lectures by 100 artists from around the world, curated by Carrie Mae Weems. Produced in collaboration with The Office.
9. “World of Wires” – theatrical production. The Kitchen, New York, NY, January 2012; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA, September 2012; French Tour, November 2012: Maison des Arts in Creteil, Le Lieu Unique in Nantes, and Le Manege in Maubeuge. Director: Jay Scheib. OBIE Award for Best Direction.
10. “A Theater of Varieties to Benefit The Wooster Group” – event. The Box, New York, NY, April 2007. Hosted by John Waters, featuring appearances by the little death, The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black, and Mikhail Baryshnikov.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES (Select List)

1. Speaker, "Can Art and Culture Accelerate Social Change?" (with Shirley Abraham, Brenda Coughlin, Holly Gordon, Judy Kibinge, Jennifer Pahlka, and Indhu Rubasingham), Skoll World Forum, Oxford, England, April 11, 2019.
2. Speaker, "Can Art Save Democracy?" (with Patrisse Cullors, Ava DuVernay, Eric Gottesman, Tabitha Jackson, Lisa Kron, Susan Meiselas, Okwui Okpokwasili), Sundance Film Festival, Park City, UT, January 26, 2019.
3. Panelist, "The Art of the Accused" (with Maggie Mustard, A.O. Scott, and Deborah Solomon), Brooklyn Book Festival, Brooklyn, NY, September 16, 2018.
4. Panelist, "Carrie Mae Weems: The Personal and the Political" (with Carrie Mae Weems, Sarah Lewis, and Damian Woetzel), Aspen Ideas Festival, Aspen, CO, June 27, 2018.
5. Speaker, "The Role of Free Speech and Creative Expression in Democracy" (with Paula Crown, Eric Gottesman, and Hank Willis Thomas), Aspen Ideas Festival, Aspen, CO, June 24, 2018.
6. Panelist, "Keeping Cultural Borders Open" (with AlSarah, Laurie Anderson, Sara Driver, Kali Holloway, Emel Mathlouthi, Jose Parla, and Barbet Schroeder), New York Film Festival, Film Society of Lincoln Center, New York, NY, October 11, 2017.
7. Panelist, "Visible and Invisible Walls" (with Hassan Hajaj and Richard Mosse, moderated by Isolde Brielmaier), Tang Museum, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY, April 20, 2017.
8. Speaker, MAKERS Women's Town Hall, MAKERS HQ, New York, NY, November 17, 2016.
9. Moderator, "How Can the Arts Advance Body Politics?," National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., November 13, 2016.
10. Speaker and Conference Participant, "Reversible: Narrating Identity from the Inside Out and the Outside In," New York University/Abu Dhabi Institute, Abu Dhabi, December 8, 2014.

PERFORMER (Select List)

1. "Summer Solstice Ritual: 12 Shouts to the Ten Forgotten Heavens." Playwright/Director: Sibyl Kempson. The Whitney Museum, New York, NY, June 2016, June 2017, January 2018, and June 2018.
2. "The Shape of Things." Conceived by Carrie Mae Weems. Park Avenue Armory, New York, NY, December 2017.
3. "Test Match." Playwright: Kate Attwell. Director: Margot Bordelon. Portland Center Stage, Portland, OR, July 2017.
4. "I'm Bleeding All Over the Place." Playwright/Director: Brooke O'Harra. La Mama, New York, NY, July 2016.
5. "And That's How the Rent Gets Paid." Playwright: Jeff Weiss and Richard C. Martinez. Director: Brooke O'Harra. The Kitchen, New York, NY, July 2015.
6. "Sorry, Robot." Playwright: Mike Iveson, Jr. Director: Will Davis. PS122/New Ohio Theater, New York, NY, January 2015.
7. "9 Scripts from a Nation at War." (Video Installation) Director: Andrea Geyer, Sharon Hayes, Ashley Hunt, Katya Sander and David Thorne. Documenta 12, Kassel, Germany, 2007; Tate Modern, England, 2008; REDCAT, Los Angeles, CA, 2009; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, 2011.

8. “Super Vision.” The Builders Association, Director: Marianne Weems. World Premiere: Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY, followed by world tour to 17 cities, 2005-7.
9. “Alladeen.” The Builders Association, Director: Marianne Weems. World Premiere: Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY, followed by world tour to 24 cities, 2003-2005.
10. “House/Lights.” The Wooster Group, Director: Elizabeth LeCompte. World Premiere: The Performing Garage, New York, NY, followed by world tour to 14 cities, 1996-2005.

ACTING AFFILIATIONS

- Company Member, JAW, Portland Center Stage, 2017
- Company Member, Sibyl Kempson’s 7 Daughters of Eve Thtr. & Perf. Co., 2015-
- Company Member, The Builders Association: 2001-7
- Associate, The Wooster Group: 1995-
- Actor, New Dramatists: 1996-
- Company Member, Institute on Arts & Civic Dialogue, Cambridge, MA: 1999
- Actor, Lincoln Center Directors Lab: 1996 & 1997

ARTIST RESIDENCIES

- Watermill Center (with Carrie Mae Weems), Watermill, NY: April 2017
- The Orchard Project (with Mike Iveson, Jr.), Catskills, NY: July 2014
- Blue Mountain Center, Blue Mountain, NY: September 2007
- Voice & Vision Theater, Bard College, Annandale on Hudson, NY: August 2007
- Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, NY: May-June 2007

SELECTION COMMITTEES

- Judge, Emmy Awards, Documentary section: 2016
- Panelist, MAP Fund/Doris Duke Charitable Foundation: 2014
- Panelist, New York State Council on the Arts, 2 sections—Film and Theater: 2010-12
- Panelist, Yaddo: 2009-2012
- Reader, Voice & Vision Theater, 2008

BOARD/ADVISORY COUNCIL/MEMBERSHIP

- Board, For Freedoms, 2018-
- Member, PEN America, 2015-
- Advisor/Curator, Segal Film Festival on Theatre and Performance, CUNY: 2014-2015
- Advisor, Boom Arts (Portland, OR): 2014-
- Advisor, NGO Committee on the Status of Women, 2013-
- Advisor, The DO School: 2011-
- Board, The Wooster Group: 2013-
- Board, Groundswell Community Mural Project: 2002-5
- Board, Third Wave Foundation: 1998-2004

Selvaratnam has produced projects featuring more than 300 public figures including:

Marina Abramovic	Halsey	Salman Rushdie
Sir David Adjaye	Senator Kamala Harris	Senator Bernie Sanders
Ghada Amer	Philip Seymour Hoffman	Marjane Satrapi
Ayad Akhtar	Nona Hendryx	Amy Schumer
Elizabeth Alexander	Patty Jenkins	Yara Shahidi
Erika Alexander	Joan Jonas	Duncan Sheik
Laurie Anderson	Cherry Jones	Gabourey Sidibe
Jack Antonoff	Ada Katz	Lorna Simpson
Rachel Antonoff	Alex Katz	Kiki Smith
Joey Arias	Keegan-Michael Key	Mario Sorrenti
Elizabeth Banks	Nicole Kidman	Nancy Spero
Dan Barber	Solange Knowles	Bryan Stevenson
Mikhail Baryshnikov	Zoe Kravitz	Elizabeth Streb
Samantha Bee	Lisa Kron	Meryl Streep
Alexandra Bell	Padma Lakshmi	Swoon
Klaus Biesenbach	Elizabeth LeCompte	Amber Tamblyn
Justin Vivian Bond	Young Jean Lee	Chrissy Teigen
Senator Cory Booker	Cindi Leive	Hank Willis Thomas
Steve Buscemi	Glenn Ligon	Mickalene Thomas
Francesco Clemente	Christian Louboutin	Threearfour
Jelani Cobb	Taylor Mac	Toure
Alan Cumming	Frederic Malle	Basil Twist
Claire Danes	Wynton Marsalis	Kate Valk
Eisa Davis	Vinoodh Matadin	Inez van Lamsweerde
Viola Davis	Julie Mehretu	Naomi Wadler
Lea DeLaria	Helen Mirren	Massimo Vignelli
Carmen de Lavallade	Moby	Darren Walker
Abigail Disney	Janet Mock	John Waters
Ava DuVernay	Janelle Monae	Representative Maxine
Oskar Eustis	Shirin Neshat	Waters
Charlotte Gainsbourg	Yoko Ono	Reggie Watts
Henry Louis Gates, Jr.	Mandy Patinkin	Carrie Mae Weems
Nelson George	Rosie Perez	Colson Whitehead
Tavi Gevinson	Ai-jen Poo	Sylvia Whitman
Whoopi Goldberg	Vernon Reid	Peggy Whitson
Thelma Golden	Alysia Reiner	Jeffrey Wright
Gigi Hadid	Boots Riley	Malik Yoba

Selvaratnam has produced/organized projects at, by, and for:

ACLU
Andrew Ondrejcek
Aubin Pictures
Baccarat
The Box (NYC)
Capitale (NYC)
Center for Health and Gender Equity
Gabri Christa
Chiara Clemente
Lisa Cortés
Di San Luca Films
Discovery Networks
EMILY's List
Ethical Fashion Initiative
The Federation
For Freedoms
Liz Garbus
Gays Against Guns
GLAMOUR
Guggenheim Museum
Catherine Gund
HBO
ICA Boston
IFC
The Kennedy Center
The Kitchen
Sarah Lewis
Le Lieu Unique (Nantes, France)
Maison des Arts (Creteil, France)
Le Manege (Maubeuge, France)
Alex Marashian
Albert Maysles
Mercedes-Benz
Ms. Foundation for Women
MoveOn
NGO Forum/World Conference on Women
in China
Pink Martini
Laura Parnes
PBS
PEN America
Planned Parenthood
PS122
The Public Theater
Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study
Rubell Family Collection
Jennifer Rubell
Tiffany Shlain
Tribeca Rooftop Studios
Sundance Channel
Sundance Film Festival
The Shed
Starz
THINX
Mickalene Thomas
Le Tigre
V-Day/One Billion Rising
The Vision & Justice Project
The Von Trapps
Lucy Walker
Carrie Mae Weems
Jed Weintrob
The Wooster Group
World Health Organization
Yaddo
Yale Rep