



outside in

**The surreal experience of a teeming city
laid bare and the hope
for its future**

Hope is a powerful drug

A short documentary

***directed by
Mark O'Toole***

Log line – Outside In

A city of eight million crushed by a pandemic, finds hope in an immigrant family's perspective during the worst of the COVID shutdown.

Synopsis – Outside In

Hope is a powerful drug. A valentine to New York & cities everywhere. An immigrant recounts how he and his family survived during NYC's historic pandemic shutdown during the spring of 2020 when 9 million people disappeared from its streets. A personal diary of an eerily empty & haunting metropolis captured while running through city streets, embalmed in a state of suspended animation. Set against COVID, racial injustice and an anti-immigrant fervor, this short documentary captures the surreal experience of a teeming city laid bare and the hope for its future.

Amidst the chaos of the New York City COVID-19 shutdown, a Bray born filmmaker with limited resources set out to capture the resilience and hope of a city on the brink.

While many turned to new hobbies like baking bread and mastering virtual meetings, one filmmaker set their sights on capturing the heart of a city in crisis. With limited equipment, filmed on an iPhone and a passion for storytelling, they turned their newfound editing skills towards creating a film that would form an historical document to a grim period in New York's history.

The result was a touching, award-winning documentary that follows one family's personal journey and reflects the spirit of a city determined to persevere. From the challenges of filming during a pandemic to its eventual screenings at film festivals worldwide, this film is a testament to the power of creativity and the human spirit

About the film

Step into a world transformed by unprecedented events, where the bustling heart of New York City stood still, and the resolute spirit of its inhabitants burned brighter than ever. Outside In is a mesmerizing documentary that captures the essence of a metropolis brought to its knees by a global crisis yet emerging with newfound resilience and hope.

At the heart of this film is O'Toole, who embarked on an extraordinary journey to chronicle the unfolding story of New York City during the tumultuous days of the pandemic. What began as a series of short vignettes on YouTube for friends confined indoors, soon blossomed into an awe-inspiring documentary that redefines our understanding of urban life during crisis.

The film grants viewers an intimate vantage point into a city stripped of its vivacious 8 million denizens, its raucous symphony of car horns and vibrant urban clamor silenced. Against the backdrop of a city facing a daily toll of a thousand lives lost to COVID, O'Toole captures the palpable fear that gripped the streets. It's a perspective that few will ever witness, offering a unique window into a city's soul during its most vulnerable hours.

What sets "Outside In" apart is O'Toole's ingenious response to a shattered dream—the cancelled NYC Half Marathon, an event he had trained months for. But rather than succumbing to disappointment, O'Toole's preparation took an extraordinary turn. Armed with his months of training, he laced up his running shoes and embarked on solitary journeys through the city's streets. With every stride, he not only preserved his physical endurance but also captured the city's empty beauty—its grandeur unobscured by the usual throngs of people. These poetic runs, more than just filling the void of the marathon, became a creative act of resilience and reclamation.

O'Toole's lens doesn't merely document desolation; it uncovers the extraordinary resilience and interconnectedness of city dwellers. As the world grappled with a pandemic, racial injustice, and anti-immigrant sentiments, O'Toole's camera navigates the city's pulse, revealing how it stood as a testament to the strength of diversity and unity. His immigrant status adds a personal dimension to the narrative, reminding us that cities are built upon the dreams of those who seek a better life, and that their tenacity is the cornerstone of urban survival.

The journey of creating "Outside In" is as captivating as the film itself. Armed with nothing but a smartphone and a gimbal, O'Toole ventures into the city's emptied streets, capturing a historic moment that feels suspended in time. In the solitude of his runs through Manhattan's vacant avenues, he discovers the city as if it were a museum, a canvas on which the emotions of a generation are painted.

As the New York Historical Museum takes O'Toole's video diaries into their esteemed digital diary collection, it's evident that his work has transcended mere documentation; it has become a testament to the human spirit's unwavering resilience. O'Toole's journey from novice to self-taught filmmaker mirrors the city's transformation—from a state of isolation to a resurgence of creativity and connection. "Outside In" is more than a documentary; it encapsulates a pivotal moment in history and presents it through the lens of hope, introspection, and unity. As you immerse yourself in this film, be prepared to witness New York City as you've never seen it before—a city that faced adversity head-on, emerged stronger, and forever etched its story into the annals of time.

Biography – Director

Mark O'Toole is a NYC based Irish producer, director and writer whose work has aired on CNN, NY1 and RTE Ireland's national broadcaster, and played at film festivals in Ireland & the USA. He co-directed *So What's in Jericho?* one of the first films for festival consideration shot on digital video, a format then in its infancy. His articles have appeared in *The Irish Times*, *New York Daily News*, *Risk Magazine* and frequently quoted in *The Wall Street Journal*. Mark is the co-founder of award-winning Storm Theatre company and co-founder of indie rock band, Audio Fiction. He has been covering COVID-19 for his blog surrealnyc.com. (his blog is now part of the New York Historical Museum's first digital collection).

Mark O'Toole got his start working as an assistant director with Oscar winning Director, Neil Jordan (*The Crying Game*, *Interview with a Vampire*) on *The Miracle*. He went on to write & direct a number of short films and commercial/music videos. His short film *Dancing on the Face of the Moon*, starring Tom Hickey, came third in the Galway Film Festival and aired on RTE television (Ireland).

His work is featured in Amy Rice & Jesse Tyler Ferguson's *Broadway Rising*, which had its world premiere at The Tribeca Film Festival 2022 and screened nationwide in cinemas across the USA. *Broadway Rising* is on Amazon Prime. O'Toole has one of the largest private collections of footage of New York City when it was shutdown in 2020.

Outside In is O'Toole's first festival submission in the short documentary section.

Production notes & credits

There's a multinational effort on the team behind Outside In.

The poem was written by a Chinese born award winning immigrant now based in Minneapolis. The narrator is an Irish born NY/London based actor. The director is an Irish born immigrant living in the USA for over 27 years. And the composer is a Chennai based musician composing the music through the prism of India's own brutal lockdown. Because everything was shut down, O'Toole couldn't rent camera equipment, so he shot the film on his iPhone, learned how to edit in the shutdown and worked with all the production crew remotely to finish the project. All shared a global experience of isolation, anxiety and horror but ultimately a hope for the future.

Poem "*Things We Carry on the Sea*"

By Wang Ping

Wang Ping was born in China and came to the U.S. in 1985. Her publications of poetry and prose include *American Visa*, *Foreign Devil*, *Of Flesh and Spirit*, *New Generation: Poetry from China Today*, *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China*, *The Magic Whip*, *The Dragon Emperor*, *The Last Communist Virgin*, *Flashcards: Poems by Yu Jian*, *Ten Thousand Waves*, and *Life of Miracles along the Yangtze and Mississippi* (AWP 2017 award for non-fiction). She won the Eugene-Kayden Award for the Best Book in Humanities and is the recipient of NEA, the Bush Artist Fellowship for poetry, the McKnight Fellowship for non-fiction, and many others. She received her Distinct Immigrant Award in 2014, and Venezuela International Poet of Honor in 2015. She is the Minnesota Poet Laureate 2021-2023, appointed by International Beat Poetry Foundation. She's also a photographer, installation artist and flamenco dancer. Her multi-media exhibitions include "Behind the Gate: After the Flood of the Three Gorges," "Kinship of Rivers" at schools, colleges, galleries, museums (MoMa NY), lock and dams, and confluences along the Mississippi River. She is professor Emerita of English at Macalester College, founder and director of Kinship of Rivers project.

www.wangping.com

www.behindthegateexhibit.wangping.com

www.kinshipofrivers.org

Narration

Mark Byrne

Mark is an Irish actor based in NY and London. Credits include the recent BBC show seen on Starz *The Dublin Murders*, he will be seen in 2021 in *Red Election* starring James D'Arcy and *When We Were Men* a gender fluid love story in which he plays a priest with a secret. Past

productions have brought him to the Manitoba Theatre Centre in The Tempest, The LA premiere of Howie the Rookie an Irish street fight odyssey and many other productions.

<https://www.imdb.me/markbyrne>

<https://www.spotlight.com/0213-8944-4487>

Composer

Sachidanand Sankaranarayanan

Sachi is a media Composer, multi-instrumentalist and music producer based in Chennai, TN, India. Trained in the Indian Carnatic music on the Mandolin for over a decade, he performs with various ethnic fusion bands and theater groups across the world. He taught himself the nuances of film music, western music theory, orchestration and electronic music production.

Since 2014, he has worked on numerous projects as a music producer and instrumentalist. He has also assisted various composers in numerous film scores.

Some of his credits include films like Aram, Dheeran. He has also worked on the score and sound design of the multilingual Amazon Prime Children Series - Charlie and Friends.

He freelances as a demo composer/beta tester for sample developer and has worked on lot of the products for Soundiron, Xperimenta, Fluffy Audio, Hypersamples.

He is also a part of library/trailer music companies like Atom Music Audio, Gargantuan Music, Jackdaw Factory, Velvet Green Music and has worked on several albums.

Sachi is also a live musician and has performed over 1000 concerts all around the world playing the Mandolin. He is also a part of the European Theater spectacle "Bharati 2" as a multi-instrumentalist and has performed in sold out shows in top venues across the world. During the Covid 19 Pandemic, he started his own sample library development under the name Story Audio and his famous Kontakt library "The Lockdown Mandolin" has been downloaded by about 2000+ users world wide.

He is currently working on a handful of film and documentary projects for theatrical/Online release.

Facemask photography

Ari Mintz

ARI MINTZ is a New York City based **photographer** specializing in people **photography** of all types, event **photography** and corporate portraits, entertainment. Ari's editorial photographs have been published in national and international publications.

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Facemask design

Stacy Igel is the founder of global impact brand of the edgy, and young contemporary athleisure brand BOY MEETS GIRL®. Her new book, Embracing the Calm in the Chaos is out this March on Harper Collins.