



# 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.

## **Director Statement**

As the world went into lockdown in March of 2020, I knew this was something monumental, unprecedented. I was inspired to document what was happening in New York City after seeing the grim news out of Italy a month earlier. Italian's locked down and confined to their homes, with the only solace being their ritual evening clapping in homage to the frontline workers but also a link to connect to the outside world.

As unconsenting participants in a global pandemic, confined to our apartments, inside looking out, I had a choice. Be an arm chair witness glued to the tv waiting for signs of hope or be outside looking in and document a city devoid of its usual bustling 9 million denizens, its car horns, it's brash sounds of life. And see a perspective that many will never see in their lifetime. In that process I rediscovered what is special about New York City and all cities, while also navigating family life.

I'd trained for the New York City Half Marathon, that was cancelled a week before the shutdown. I used that training to run the empty streets of Manhattan and document a city of 9 million, now laid bare for the first time in its history. It felt like running in a museum.

Against the pandemic backdrop was a rapidly growing racial injustice movement and an anti-immigrant fervor, of which I am an immigrant. It reminded me that New York is a city built on immigrants and cities are resilient for a reason and will survive this. I couldn't get access to film equipment, so I purchased a Gimbal online and used my iPhone X to film. I then used the shutdown to learn how to edit a film. Making this film allowed me to keep my sanity during this grim period in our collective history and form a deeper connection with my family.

## **Biography – Director**

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). He grew up in the heart of Ireland's film industry, Bray, Co Wicklow, where he was enthralled watching film crews shoot in

his dad's bar, The Harbour Bar (voted the Lonely Planet's Best Bar in the World). He was regaled by his father's own youthful forays on film sets. His father used to pal around with acting legend Peter O'Toole, when he was filming in Bray. Co-founder of Storm Theatre and NYC indie band Audio Fiction. Frequent contributor to The Irish Times. He has been covering COVID-19 for his blog [www.surrealnyc.com](http://www.surrealnyc.com). (his blog is now part of the New York Historical Museum's digital diary collection).

Outside In This 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](http://www.wangping.com)

[www.behindthegateexhibit.wangping.com](http://www.behindthegateexhibit.wangping.com)

[www.kinshipofrivers.org](http://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.

[www.arimintzphoto.com](http://www.arimintzphoto.com)

