

LGBT Filmmaker's "White Ceiling" TV Pilot Set for Live Reading at 30th Anniversary of Essence Festival in New Orleans

LGBT Filmmaker Kirk Shannon-Butts' Selected for Live Script Reading of his TV pilot "White Ceiling" at Essence Film Fest in the New Orleans.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES, June 13, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The 30th

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While "White Ceiling" is a work of fiction, it is deeply rooted and inspired by my own experiences working in the super competitive contemporary art world."

Kirk Shannon-Butts, Writer & Series Creator

Anniversary of [Essence](#) Festival selects LGBT filmmaker's "White Ceiling" TV pilot for Live [Script](#) Reading at Essence [Film](#) Festival (EFF). While over a half of million attendees are expected to pour into New Orleans to celebrate the annual July 4th Weekend Festival of Culture, on Friday, July 5th at 1:50PM in the Black Box Theater in the New Orleans Convention Center, filmmaker, Kirk Shannon-Butts, will present a live reading of his acclaimed television series pilot, "White Ceiling," as part of the 3rd Annual Essence Film Fest. Produced by Essence Studios, this event is free and open to the public. It is the public debut of "White

Ceiling" and will feature noted New Orleans actors reading all the character roles live for the very first time.

"White Ceiling" unfolds the rarified journey of Randall Danvers, 28, an art curator's rise in the cutthroat billion-dollar art world. Smart, talented, Black, and gay, Randall is one of the most sought-after young curators in the New York art scene. Even with this, the debonair Harlem resident is dismissed by his conniving mentor and legendary gallery owner, Fiona Lautner, while she maintains the lucrative artists roster Randall cultivated generating millions of sales for the Fiona Lautner Gallery. Free and untangled, Randall makes the bold decision to open his own gallery way uptown deep in a neighborhood where artists live and create yet no galleries exist. A unicorn who turns into a wolf, "White Ceiling" follows Randall as he navigates his way to the pinnacle of the ruthless art world as he manages love, family, friendship, business, and the 1% who invest in art.

"After my last film, "Julien's Bed," in 2012, I met an emerging artist who was having his very first significant exhibition. I worked with him doing Marketing, PR, Social Media, Content Creation,

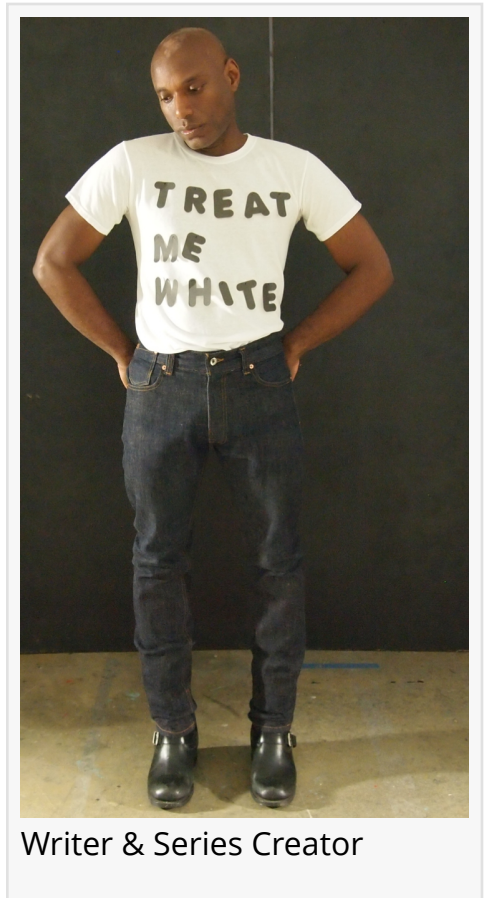
and Curating. The exhibition was a huge hit selling 9 of 11 artworks in less than two (2) hours. With that, my journey in the art world began. Soon, I learned that less than 2% of Art Curators at art institutions and galleries across the United States were Black. These experiences prompted me to write my Art Diaries detailing and documenting all of the drama, gatekeeping, and obstacles I tackled on my journey to becoming an Art Curator. These encounters are the foundation for "White Ceiling." While "White Ceiling" is a work of fiction. It is deeply rooted and inspired by my own experiences in the contemporary art world," says "White Ceiling" writer and creator, Kirk Shannon-Butts.

The Essence Film Festival showcases exceptional original projects in film, television, music, and new media created by Black storytellers across the African diaspora. EFF believes Black stories deserve to be told in their full truth with intent to disrupt mainstream Hollywood narratives. Now in its third year, the festival is building a movement that uplifts and normalizes globalization and fosters the empowerment of Black creatives. "White Ceiling" is Shannon-Butts' very first television series pilot and fulfills Essence Film Fest's mission to connect Black storytellers with audiences seeking to discover fresh talent, new voices, diverse perspectives, and innovative narratives. It is rapidly becoming the premiere destination for emerging global creatives. Each festival day offers the public free live script readings, movie screenings, industry conversations, symposiums, workshops, panel discussions, and other transformative cinematic experiences and events.

Shannon-Butts holds a BA in Marketing & Arts Management from The American College and an MFA in Film/TV Production from Chapman University. His first feature film, "Blueprint," brought worldwide accolades and critical acclaim receiving, 'Best Film from the African Diaspora' nomination at FESPACO in Burkina Faso, nominated for 'Best First Feature' at Frameline, and shortlisted for the prestigious Gotham Awards' "Best Film Not Playing at a Theater Near You." He has been featured in L'Uomo Vogue, Out magazine's "Out100," and Uptown magazine's "Flipping the Script: 35 People to Watch in Hollywood."

For more information, contact Kirk Ray at kirk@flickeria.com or 917.545.4360.

Kirk Ray
FLICKERIA
+1 917-545-4360
[email us here](#)



Writer & Series Creator

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