

america. meet america.

LUMBERVILLE

a film by vincent gagliostro



America is beautiful, when it's not being cruel.



Lumberville is road movie, familiar enough to feel like you were raised with the stories it tells, but surprising, as only America can be. As much about feeling lost as being found, *Lumberville* is a folk tale reminding us that the gay American dilemma is part of a larger human dilemma, one that masks the messy fantasies at the core of the entire American project, and how, when freedom is a thing uncaged in the wilderness, it comes out the other side as something else.



DANNY

Danny was raised on a farm in upstate New York in a big Irish family, that was left-of-center in a working-class way. His dad taught him boxing and books, and also that standing up for what's right was part of being a man. But Danny was too gay for the farm, and moved to New York. He was brought up to handle a roundhouse punch, but New York tough is different than farm tough. He fled to L.A., the Land of Lost Toys, right into the arms of a guy who was great on paper, but a liar and a cheat, and more destructive than the Santa Ana winds. The only good thing about Kit was his college friend, Casper, who had everything and nothing at the same time.

CASPER

Casper was raised to believe he should work, even though he didn't really have to. He decided his best escape was to Oxford, and a law degree, but he avoided his classmates, and lived through old movies. He loved Geraldine Page, and he hated most everyone else. Casper also ended up in L.A., but knew it was all bullshit within a week, and it certainly wasn't where he wanted to spend out his days. Before he met Danny, he had only seen America from an airplane. He didn't realize it was an entirely different country on the ground, or what an expedition a simple road trip home can become.



LUMBERVILLE

Danny wasn't sure he even liked Casper, but he got the feeling he was someone you could depend on, and he hadn't known anyone like that in a really long time. Besides, he provided the perfect excuse to get back home: Danny needed to get away from Kit, and Casper had just bought a decent used car and was headed east.

They knew nothing about each other, really, and neither imagined the American road might have anything to teach them. But they saw things they'd never seen before, including what trust might actually look like. By the time they were back where they belonged, their journey had morphed into an expedition, across the land of the permanently broken-hearted, to the wilderness of secrets waiting in Casper's past.

To look at him, you might say Casper was charmed, except for the whole gay thing. It seems funny to say it in this day and age, but coming out hadn't landed very well with his mother, so Casper decided to drop in on Rose on his way home, who cooked for his family when he was a boy. She practically raised him, if raising a child is measured in balance, humanity, and the staunchest of loyalties. Where Casper felt safe, it was always Rose's doing, but he never imagined she might also be a witness to things about the past he didn't know himself.

One of them was Loretta, who she'd made a home with before Casper was even born.

They met when they were both counselors, at the camp where Loretta's mom was the cook. Rose moved in when Loretta's folks needed tending to, and they all lived in the house where Loretta was born, just off River Road.

It was so close to the Delaware River you could hear the breakwater, and you could see the high water marks on the stone mason's place from the porch. River Road rises and falls into the floodplain like a rollercoaster in a county fair, and the higher ground is dotted with dairy farms.

Danny and Casper had to drive for thousands of miles to get there, and found themselves dwarfed by American splendor and lost in its terrors along the way. But they also discovered it's never too late to find your way, or in Rose's words:

"There's no such thing as enough time. But, if you think about it, the only thing we really need to figure out is how to let go. So when we figure that out isn't really the point, so long as we finally do."

Danny and Casper had navigated their way home without realizing it, to the silent and sturdy town of Lumberville. They were wrapped in the safety of a bond that had grown as vast as the Great Plains, and tucked into the arms of a future they never saw coming. America is big, big enough to be cruel without even knowing it, but Lumberville was filled to the brim with mercy.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

My new film, *Lumberville* is about two Americas.

In 1968, I discovered activism and my attraction to boys. Vietnam War protests were consuming us, Jane Fonda was my hero—and still is—and Eugene McCarthy, a poet, was running for president. I was 13 and gay, and America felt full of promise.

I lived in that America until 1981, when I was on a crash course with another America, one full of lies. My community was being decimated by AIDS and government indifference. I was forced to confront the realization that the America of my youth was all in my head.

In *After Louie* I told the story of the silence between two generations of gay men and

the traumas many of us kept to ourselves. I wanted to revisit the idea of the secrets we keep, this time as a frontier struggle between the America in our heads and the one that is true. And as a gay man I wanted to tell this story the way gay people have always told our stories: handed down, from generation to generation, like a folk tale.

Everything I thought about America turned out to be a fantasy. *Lumberville* is a road film about the collision of that fantasy of America with the queer reality of it, a hard look from inside a queer car. It is also a story for this precise moment in history, a moment none of us seem to have seen coming, but one we need to hear, NOW.



THE WRITERS

Vincent Gagliostro and Avram Finkelstein, each significant artists in their own right, collaborated on some of the most recognizable political messaging to come out of the early moments of the AIDS crisis in New York, and were then instrumental in the formulation of the queer identity that followed in the footsteps of AIDS. With *Lumberville*, they collaborate as writing partners, and aim their queer gaze at the fraught, wild, and tense American political moments of the early 21st Century, when everything is up for grabs, but filled with the radical potential, wonder, and promise that has always been the core of the American frontier. *Lumberville* is part American folk saga, part State of the Queer Union, and proof of the things that just don't seem possible anymore. It's a portrait of what it means to be mapped and still feel displaced, and to be an American and an outsider at the same time.





VINCENT GAGLIOSTRO, writer and director

Vincent Gagliostro is an artist, filmmaker, activist and an original member of the political AIDS activist group ACT UP. In 2016 Gagliostro made his feature film writing and directing debut with *After Louie*, starring Alan Cumming, Zachary Booth and Sarita Choudhury. The film, travelling the festival circuit had its world premiere at BFI Flare in London Other festival highlights included the Provincetown International FF (centerpiece), Hamptons International FF (centerpiece), OUTfest/NEWfest (spotlight), Key West FF (award for best LGBT film) and the closing night film at Frameline. *After Louie*, premiered its theatrical run in New York City on March 30th at the Cinema Village, as well as in VOD release.

Recent projects include contributing cinematographer for the Oscar nominated documentary, *How To Survive a Plague*.

Writer and director of a short documentary, *AFTER SILENCE: The Story Behind the Image* (a portrait of Avram Finkelstien, creator of the SILENCE=DEATH image). It showed in film festivals and art fairs internationally. He has lectured at Yale on the subject of Art and Activism and his graphic design work for ACT UP was recently seen in the Whitney Museum's exhibit titled, *An Incomplete History of Protest: Selections from the Whitney's Collection, 1940-2017*. His work as a graphic artist and fine artist is included in the permanent collections of The Whitney, The Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan, and Cooper-Hewitt.

His work with recording artist Prince as art director on three award-winning music videos, *Cream, Diamonds and Pearls* and *Kiss* prompted his move into video art and film.



Photograph, Eric McNatt,
2017 Queer Art Community
Portrait Project

AVRAM FINKELSTEIN, writer/production designer

Avram Finkelstein is an artist, writer and a founding member of the collective that designed the Silence=Death image, and the art collective Gran Fury. His work is in the permanent collections of The Whitney, The Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan, and The Smithsonian. Finkelstein's book for University of California Press, *After Silence: A History of AIDS through Its Images*, was nominated for a 2018 Lambda Literary Award, a 2018 International Center of Photography Infinity Award, and reviewed in The Nation, Critical Inquiry, and Literary Hub. He was a 2012 finalist for the Creative Capital/Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant.

Finkelstein was the Production Designer on Vincent Gagliostro's 2017 film, *After Louie*, and Rodrigo Bellot's *Tu Me Manques*, now in post-production. He consulted on the production design for Sam Feder's upcoming film, *Disclosure*, did art fabrication for Matthew Barney's *Cremaster 1* and *Cremaster 5*, and received special thanks for consulting with the art department on *The Dallas Buyer's Club*. His production design for the Brooklyn Ballet's *Snow* won him a 2015 Bessie nomination for Outstanding Visual Design.

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