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press release

## SHANGRI-LA DIRECTED BY ISABEL SANDOVAL

It's California, during the Great Depression. A woman is confiding her most intimate thoughts in a church confessional, while the man on the other side listens silently and intently. But this is no ordinary religious ritual seeking salvation. The woman — a second generation Filipino farmhand — is rapt in roleplay reverie, her sensuous words aimed at her white American lover, during a historic period when such interracial relationships were forbidden by state law. The confession box transforms into a romantic time machine, ecstatic and melancholic, traveling into alternate futures. She manifests as multiple, dazzling women, and they can love freely.

*SHANGRI-LA*, directed, written & edited by Isabel Sandoval, is the 21st commission from Miu Miu *Women's Tales*. The acclaimed short-film series invites today's most profound and original female directors to investigate vanity and femininity in the 21st century.

Isabel Sandoval (she/her) is a director, writer, editor, producer and actress from The Philippines who lives and works in New York City. She made history at the 2019 Venice International Film Festival's 'Giornate degli Autori' section with the first film directed by a trans woman of color to ever screen in competition. That film, *Lingua Franca*, is Isabel's first feature made in the U.S., and has recently been nominated for the 2021 Film Independent Spirit John Cassavetes Award. Isabel's directorial debut was with the noir-inflected *Señorita*, which earned her the Emerging Director Award at the Asian American International Film Festival. This was followed up by the Marcos-era nun drama, *Apparition*, which won an audience award at the Deauville Asian Film Festival and currently developing her fourth feature, *Tropical Gothic* selected for the 2021 Berlinale Talents Project.

The protagonist in *Shangri-La* is played by Isabel herself, and her co-star is Matthew Fifer (he/him), an actor-director whose film *Cicada* premiered at the BFI London Film Festival in September 2020. *Shangri-La* was filmed in Los Angeles, during December 2020.

"I was stunned, honored, and privileged," says Isabel, "to be invited to direct the next Miu Miu *Women's Tales*." *Shangri-La* becomes a fantasy showcase of the latest Miu Miu collection. "I regard costumes as an expression of the lead character's potential as a woman," Isabel explains, "where she envisions herself as a warrior, princess or goddess." All these looks allow the protagonist to feel, "power, allure, ambition and strength."

The title *Shangri-La* summons the idea of earthly paradise, isolated from the world. For some immigrants, America was a promised Shangri-La, whose reality in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, turned out to be a different story. Isabel Sandoval's film turns that historic gaze around — through the additional lens of a trans woman of color — into an optimistic portrait of freedom, liberation and elusive Utopia, away from prejudice.

*SHANGRI-LA* digitally premieres on February 23, 2021 on miumiu.com and Miu Miu social channels.

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