

# PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

## Canadian Artist-Filmmaker Heidi Thompson Premieres Award-Winning Feature *Sveva Caetani: Recapitulation – A Journey* at Fresh Stream Film Competition 2025

(Canada / Armenia / Italy – 2025) — The Fresh Stream Film Competition is proud to spotlight *Sveva Caetani: Recapitulation – A Journey*, a visually immersive and deeply poetic feature film by Canadian artist and filmmaker **Heidi Thompson**, with cinematography, editing, and animation by Armenian filmographer **Nikita Bagratuni**.

The film has already garnered significant international acclaim—winning **Best Experimental Feature** at the MEI Film Festival, **Experimental Feature Award** at the Montreal International Film Awards, and **Best Experimental Film** at Bridge Fest—as well as multiple nominations across European and North American festivals.

Blending art, history, myth, and meditative storytelling, *Recapitulation – A Journey* invites audiences into the extraordinary life and imagination of Italian-Canadian artist **Sveva Caetani** (1917–1994), whose 56-painting series *Recapitulation* stands as one of the most important hidden masterpieces of 20th-century visionary art. Fresh Stream Film Competition celebrates bold, boundary-pushing works, and Thompson’s film—fusing hand-painted artworks, symbolic animation, atmospheric voice synthesis, and an original AI-assisted score—aligns seamlessly with the festival’s mission to promote innovative global cinema.

— *Flight Deck Film Review* ★★★★★ November 26, 2025

“A transcendent experience of art and spirit. *Sveva Caetani: Recapitulation – A Journey* dissolves the boundary between cinema, painting, music, and spiritual autobiography. Watching it feels like walking through another person’s inner world and returning softened, quieter, and more vulnerable to beauty.”

# Film Synopsis

## **SVEVA CAETANI: RECAPITULATION – A JOURNEY (84 minutes)**

*An Illuminated Descent through Darkness, Memory, and Transcendence*

This poetic docu-animation traces the life and inner world of **Sveva Caetani**, the Italian-Canadian artist whose epic 56-painting watercolor cycle *Recapitulation* chronicles a personal odyssey echoing Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

As a young woman exiled to rural British Columbia, Sveva endured two decades of isolation after the death of her father, Leone Caetani, an Italian prince, scholar, and parliamentarian. Her mother's emotional collapse confined them both, shaping Sveva's inner universe—one filled with myth, loss, philosophy, and spiritual longing.

Emerging from this long seclusion, Sveva transformed her memories into a visionary cycle of paintings that map the descent into suffering, the struggle toward self-knowledge, and the luminous ascent into artistic and spiritual liberation.

The film blends:

- Sveva's original paintings
- Animated sequences inspired by her symbolism
- Meditative narration in English, Italian, and Dantean echoes
- A haunting cello-and-choral musical score
- Archival materials and poetic cinematic language

Through this immersive journey, the film reveals the endurance of the human spirit, the transformative power of art, and the universal search for meaning.

# Biographies

## **Heidi Thompson — Director, Producer, Writer (Canada)**

**Heidi Thompson** is a Canadian artist, photographer, and filmmaker based in Coldstream, British Columbia. A lifelong practitioner of Vipassana meditation and painter of luminous abstract works inspired by nature, Thompson brings a profoundly contemplative lens to all her creative work.

For more than 40 years, she has been connected to the legacy of **Sveva Caetani**—as Sveva's photographer, friend, and eventual publisher of the original 1995 art book *Recapitulation*,

which received the 1996 VanCity Book of Excellence Award. Thompson has exhibited internationally and published several books, including *Calm Focus Joy*, an introduction to breath-awareness meditation for children.

Her debut feature film, *Sveva Caetani: Recapitulation – A Journey*, synthesizes her experience as an artist, meditator, and storyteller. Working independently with no external funding, she self-produced the film as a labour of love—honouring Sveva’s legacy and bringing her visionary work to a global audience. The film has already won multiple international awards and will be screen at the Palazzo Caetani in the new year. Currently, Sveva Caetani’s entire *Recapitulation* painting series can be seen at the MAXXI Museum in Rome, the first major exhibition of her work. Sveva passed away in 1994, and is an artist who has remained virtually anonymous to the rest of the world.

## Nikita Bagratuni — Cinematographer, Editor, Animation Artist (Armenia)

**Nikita Bagratuni** is an Armenian cinematographer, editor, and visual effects artist whose work spans documentary, experimental film, and art-based cinematic storytelling. Known for his sensitivity to light, texture, and atmospheric detail, Bagratuni brings a refined visual language to international film collaborations.

Working closely with director Heidi Thompson, Bagratuni developed the film’s visual world—digitally animating Sveva Caetani’s 56 paintings, creating symbolic transitions, and shaping the film’s immersive rhythm. His work bridges traditional artistic sensibility with contemporary digital tools, enabling the film to honour Caetani’s original watercolor technique while expanding it into a living, moving universe.

His cross-cultural background and commitment to expressive visual storytelling have made him an emerging voice in experimental cinema.

## About the Film

- **Title:** *Sveva Caetani: Recapitulation – A Journey*
- **Director/Producer/Writer:** Heidi Thompson
- **Cinematographer/Editor/Animation:** Nikita Bagratuni
- **Language Versions:** English, Italian, French, Russian
- **Length:** 84 minutes
- **Trailer:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36S0BkfmOOs>

- **Country of Origin:** Canada / Armenia
- **Genres:** Art Film, Experimental, Docu-Animation, Cultural Biography
- **Awards:** MEI Winner • Montreal International Winner • Bridge Fest Winner • Multiple Nominations

## Press Contact

**Heidi Thompson**

Coldstream Books / Heidi Thompson Art Films

[www.heidithompson.ca](http://www.heidithompson.ca)

Email: [htcthompson@hotmail.com](mailto:htcthompson@hotmail.com)

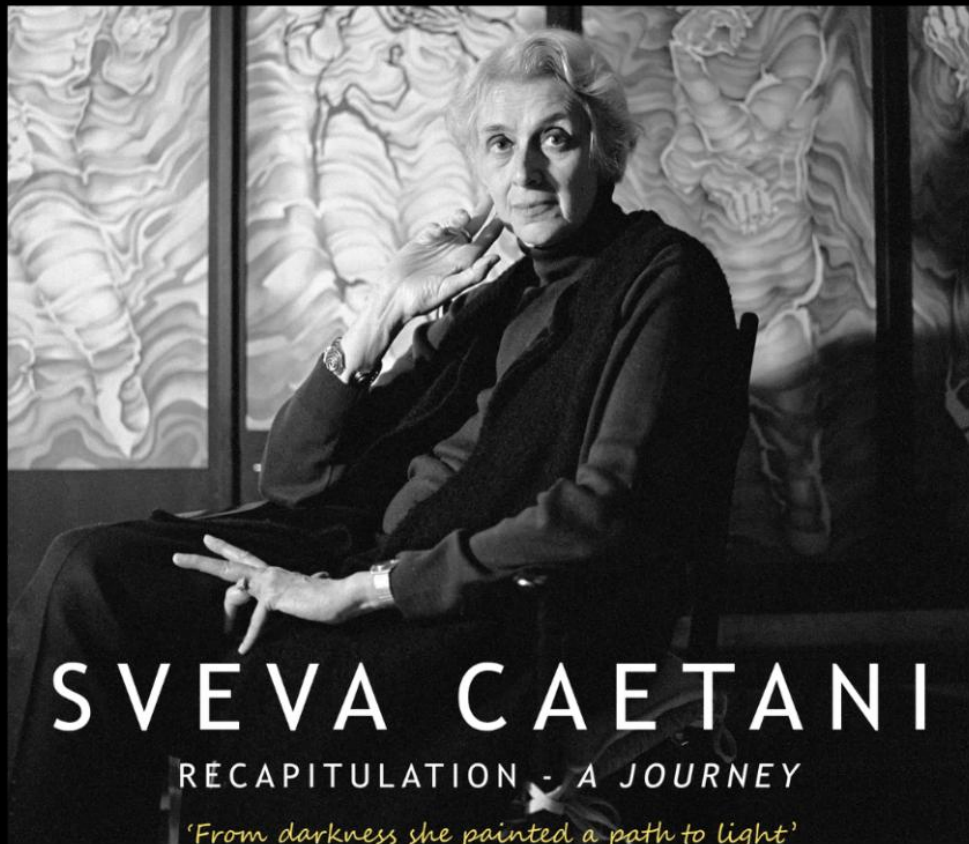
# SVEVA CAETANI: RECAPITULATION - A JOURNEY



*From darkness she painted a path to light...*

DIRECTED & PRODUCED BY HEIDI THOMPSON  
FILMED BY NIKITA BAGRATUNI





# SVEVA CAETANI

RECAPITULATION - A JOURNEY

*'From darkness she painted a path to light'*



A FILM BY HEIDI THOMPSON  
CINEMATOGRAPHY NIKITA BAGRATUNI



# FLIGHT DECK

*Critique Analysis*

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## SVEVA CAETANI: RECAPITULATION - A JOURNEY

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★★★★★

### Critical Analysis

Watching *SVEVA CAETANI: RECAPITULATION - A JOURNEY* feels less like viewing a film and more like entering a sanctuary—somewhere between a cathedral of color and a dream carved from memory. I don't often encounter a work that dissolves the boundary between cinema, painting, music, and spiritual autobiography, but Heidi Thompson's film does exactly that. It feels alive, not in the sense of a narrative unfolding, but in the sense of a soul revealing itself layer by layer. I came away from it with the uncanny sensation that I had walked through

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another person's inner world and returned somehow softened, quieter, more vulnerable to beauty.

Thompson's relationship with Sveva Caetani permeates every frame. She is not merely adapting an artist's work—she is continuing a conversation, honoring a friendship, placing herself as both witness and interpreter of Sveva's remarkable spiritual odyssey. Knowing that Sveva spent decades in enforced silence and emotional isolation—years shaped by the early death of her father and her mother's psychological collapse—I couldn't help but view every painting as an act of survival. The film amplifies that feeling. The animation and poetic narration don't embellish the paintings; they open them, as if revealing their breath. It is impossible not to sense the weight of exile and the

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astonishing transformation of suffering into luminous color.

There is a softness to Thompson's approach that I found profoundly moving. She avoids the traditional rhythms of biography and instead offers a meditative encounter, almost as if she were guiding the audience through a ritual. The AI-generated score works unexpectedly well; it becomes the sotto voce of consciousness, the hum of inner time. I began to feel like I was floating through a spiritual landscape rather than watching a documentary. Sveva's imagery, with its echoes of Dante, feels mythic—filled with archetypal figures, gates, thresholds, paths of descent and ascent. Yet Thompson frames them with such care and reverence that the film becomes less an analysis of symbolism and

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more an invitation to contemplate one's own passages through shadow.

What struck me most is how the film understands silence—not as emptiness, but as a creative medium. Sveva's decades of seclusion, which might have destroyed another person, become here a crucible for illumination. Thompson, who knew Sveva personally, captures the paradox of that solitude: its pain and its fierce, unbroken connection to life. The film seems to whisper that silence is where the soul reorganizes itself, where grief transfigures into meaning. Watching these paintings gently animate into being, I felt as though I were witnessing the slow emergence of a voice that had been buried alive and yet refused to die.

The symbolic movements of the animation deepen this reading in subtle ways. Colors

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seem to pulse as if breathing. Figures drift forward like memories resurfacing.

Pathways open and close like the stages of awakening. Every gesture feels intentional. There is an almost alchemical sensibility to it, as though the film were demonstrating how darkness, when met with courage, becomes the very material of light. The recurring interplay of radiance and shadow mirrors Sveva's life: the long night of confinement followed by an outpouring of vision that reads like a personal resurrection.

I was moved, too, by the humility of the filmmaking. With a modest budget and no institutional support, Thompson crafts a work that feels grand not because of its scale but because of its sincerity. There is no ego in this film. Instead, there is devotion—devotion to Sveva, to art, to the

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fragile miracle of endurance. It is rare to encounter a film that is so utterly uninterested in spectacle and so deeply committed to the interior world. In that way, it reminded me of the best of experimental and spiritual cinema, where the goal is not to entertain but to invite transformation.

By the end, I felt as though I had been entrusted with something sacred.

*Recapitulation – A Journey* is not just a film; it is an experience of stillness in a world that rarely allows for stillness. It feels like a prayer, a love letter, and a luminous mirror held up to the truth that the human spirit can survive almost anything. More than that, it suggests that beauty is not the opposite of suffering but the form suffering takes when it has been patiently transfigured.

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