

Future Feminist Archive Symposium
Presented by Contemporary Art and Feminism & AGNSW
Centenary Auditorium Art Gallery of NSW, Domain Rd, Sydney
Friday 6 March 10am-3.15pm

Women's Gaze and the Feminist Film Archive
Curators Loma Bridge, Margot Nash, Jeni Thornley
Panel 1.30pm-3.00pm



Figure 1. Robin Laurie *We Aim To Please* (Robin Laurie & Margot Nash 1976)

In this session, filmmakers Martha Ansara, Margot Nash and Jeni Thornley return to their feminist origins and discuss some of the groundbreaking films they produced in the 1970s. Individual presentations will include clips from *Film For Discussion* (Martha Ansara with the Sydney Women's Film Group 1973), *We Aim To Please* (Robin Laurie and Margot Nash 1976) and *Maidens* (Jeni Thornley 1978). Joining them is emerging filmmaker, Natalie Krikowa, who suggests that these pioneering women laid the foundations upon which a new generation of feminist filmmakers, like her, now stand. Other key films from the period - *My Survival as an Aboriginal* (Essie Coffey 1978), *Size 10* (Sarah Gibson and Susan Lambert 1978) and *For Love or Money* (Megan McMurchy, Margot Nash, Margot Oliver and Jeni Thornley 1983) will also be discussed.

The panel highlights the importance of recognising Australian women's film history by working towards the creation of a digital-online space, providing scholars and film-arts-media related organisations with an invaluable research and study tool. Film scholar Sarah Attfield will chair the session.

***Film For Discussion, We Aim To Please, Maidens, My Survival as an Aboriginal, Size 10, and For Love or Money* will screen in their entirety in the SCA Galleries, Sydney College of the Arts University of Sydney (SCA), Kirkbride Way, Rozelle. Thursday 5 March – Saturday 28 March**

Opening Night - Future Feminist Archive SCA Wednesday 4 March 7pm
Future Feminist Archive features a variety of engagements with the archive, from official records to neglected artefacts, alternate documents, feminist films, The Artists Archive and intergenerational passing on of memories
Launch -Tracey Moffatt will discuss her recent work Wednesday 4th March 6pm. SCA Auditorium. Registration required.

Women's Gaze and the Feminist Film Archive Film Screenings

**SCA Galleries, Sydney College of the Arts
University of Sydney, Kirkbride Way, Rozelle
Thursday 5 March – Saturday 28 March 2015**

The Australian feature film renaissance and the emergence of a new 'women's cinema' occurred at the same time, but the story of feminist filmmaking in Australia is less well known and in danger of being forgotten. The mainstream film renaissance of the 1970s was concerned with nationalistic artistic longings and the desire to compete with European art films at Cannes and Hollywood at the box office. But the new 'women's cinema' arose from other more complex desires. Second wave feminism was sweeping the world, offering women an analysis of male power and female subjectivity. Women wanted to create alternative images of women to those offered by the dominant white male patriarchy and epitomized by the Hollywood dream machine. Women had mostly been excluded from active participation in the 'new wave' film movements of the 1960s. Now there was a growing hunger amongst young feminists to gain access to the means of production and to make films about women's issues. These included discrimination against women, domestic violence, sexuality, beauty and body image, and the notion that women's 'place' was in the home not in the public sphere. Films that emerged spoke of women's passionate desire for justice and freedom, of the quiet desperation of many women's lives, and of stories of resistance ignored in the history books.

These legacy films are part of a larger body of work by women, which has provided the foundations for much cultural work by third wave feminists. Whilst feminism has evolved, feminist projects continue to analyse identity, gender roles and representation in new ways. Third-wave feminists, whose interests vary and often intersect gender, queer and race studies, are now working across multiple platforms in a digital world and discovering new audiences. In 2015, forty years after International Women's Year, second and third wave feminist filmmakers continue to produce cultural works as activists for change.

The Films

***Film for Discussion*, Martha Ansara and Sydney Women's Film Group (1973) 24 mins**

A docu-drama revolving around issues of work and family emerging from the early Australian Women's Liberation Movement, *Film for Discussion* was scripted through "consciousness-raising" workshops. It sought to promote Women's Liberation by engaging viewers in active discussion, hence its name. Production: Sydney Women's Film Group. With Jeni Thornley and John Brotherton.

***We Aim to Please*, Robin Laurie, Margot Nash (1976) 13 mins**

We Aim to Please is a film about female sexuality that not only touches the areas of paranoia, fear and doubt, which we as women experience in relation to our bodies and physical self image, but which is also joyful, erotic and funny. The film is in three sections.

- Setting up the elements: us, the women filmmakers, sexxx the city.
- How it feels: female vulnerability in a violent society that expects women to be the flatterers.
- Breaking the silence: direct action and an attempt at a cinematic definition of female sexuality that is not idealised.

***Maidens*, Jeni Thornley (1978) 27mins**

Maidens is a poetic documentary about four generations of the filmmaker's maternal family using photographs, letters, home movies, and excerpts from Australian feminist films of the time. The filmmaker searches the archive as if to understand her place in both family and society. Contradictions around love, work, marriage, children, war and freedom surge amidst the cathartic impact of feminism and film. '*Maidens is an extraordinary mixture of feminist and cinematic riddles...while it is a very personal odyssey it is also a discourse on independent feminist film practice in Australia.*' Lesley Stern.

***Size 10*, Sarah Gibson and Susan Lambert (1978) 19 mins**

Size 10 portrays how women's body images have been formed and deformed by advertising and sexism and analyses the separation of women from their bodies and each other. Four women tell their stories of the conditioning they received as teenagers to conform to stereotyped images of women in looks and dress – they all desired to be the 'perfect' size 10 and disliked at least some part of their bodies. Weaving throughout on the soundtrack is Robyn Archer's song 'Size 10'. Her lyrics augment the voices in the film.

***My Survival as an Aboriginal*, Essie Coffey (1979) 49 mins**

In *My Survival as an Aboriginal*, singer and activist Essie Coffey, "Bush Queen", takes us into the life of Dodge City, Brewarrina - far northwest New South Wales. The film was made at a time when the life of so-called "urban" Aboriginals was rarely pictured on screen. Essie Coffey directed the content of this film.

***For Love or Money*, Megan McMurchy, Margot Nash, Margot Oliver and Jeni Thornley (1983) 107mins**

Five years in the making, with contributions from hundreds of women and over 200 Australian films, *For Love or Money* is a unique, superbly crafted pictorial history of Australian women. The film chronicles the cycles of women's gains, and losses as they are moved in and out of the workforce according to demands of the time. It analyses how women's unpaid and voluntary work keeps an entire system running smoothly, in peacetime and in war. This classic documentary remains relevant today as women continue the unfinished campaigns for equal pay, maternity leave and childcare, and still carry the major responsibility for caring and nurturing.

***The Newtown Girls*, Natalie Krikowa, Emma Keltie and Elyse Horne (2012)**

Scarlet is a girl determined to find true love in the quirky queer scene of Newtown... if only she could figure out what she really wants. *The Newtown Girls* is a 10 part comedy web series in which Scarlet must delve into the depths of dating drama in order to find her true soul mate.

Women's Gaze and the Feminist Film Archive

Curated by Loma Bridge, Margot Nash, Jeni Thornley

Co-ordinator and contact: Sarah Attfield (m) 0430134828

Sarah.Attfield@uts.edu.au

RSVP Future Feminist Archive Symposium (6th March AGNSW) by 4th March info@crossart.com.au

**Future Feminist Archive is hosted by
Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) University of Sydney
and Contemporary Arts and Feminism**



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Sydney College of the Arts – Future Feminist Archive
<http://sydney.edu.au/sca/galleries-events/future-feminist-archive/index.shtml>

**Future Feminist Archive Symposium is hosted by
Contemporary Art and Feminism & AGNSW**
<http://contemporaryartandfeminism.com>

