

WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVALS & #WOMENINFILM DATABASES

A HANDBOOK



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A Handbook

SPIRAL COLLECTIVES



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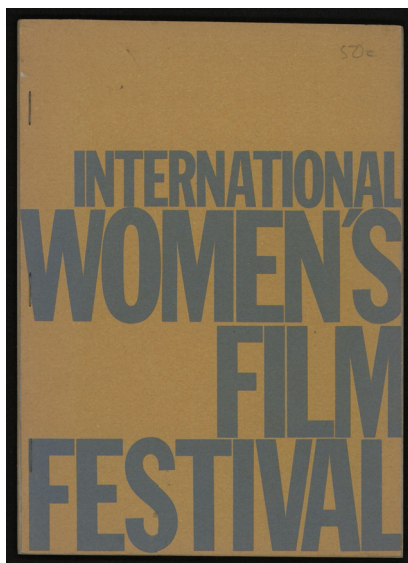
#DIRECTEDBYWOMEN #AOTEAROA, 2018-2020

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PREFACE: WHY WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVALS & DATABASES?

Marian Evans



*Cover International Women's Film Festival catalogue, Aotearoa
New Zealand 1975.*

WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVALS IN AOTEAROA

Women's film festivals were introduced to Aotearoa in 1975, International Women's Year, thanks to local filmmaker and photographer Adrienne Martyn.



*Adrienne Martyn showing Robin Scholes' class how to splice film
Auckland 1974. Photograph Margot Nash.*

Adrienne, then based in Sydney, was a member of the Sydney Women's Film Group which started planning an Australian international women's film festival in 1974.^a Adrienne took news of the festival back home. As the festival catalogue states, 'It was immediately obvious that everything possible should be done to extend the films here'.

A small group was formed, initial funding found, and organisation began for a six-centre tour, 'each involving the help and co-operation of a wide circle of people'. The names of co-ordinators include some who became well known in the arts, including film producer Robin Scholes, photographer Fiona Clark,^b theatre practitioner and film director Kate JasonSmith, artist Anita Narbey, who was also part of the Christchurch Women Artists Group that grew alongside Spiral, and Adrienne herself — now living back in Aotearoa, as well as familiar names from other feminist projects.

The catalogue provides additional acknowledgement to 'the women's organisations throughout New Zealand for their united effort towards making this exhibition happen'. This model is very similar to the women's film festival practices followed internationally today. It's also very similar to Spiral's practices.

^a Personal communication Adrienne Martyn August 2025. See also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Women%27s_Film_Festival_\(Australia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Women%27s_Film_Festival_(Australia)); https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sydney_Women%27s_Film_Group; <https://www.sens-esofocinema.com/2002/australian-women/chapman/>

^b Mis-spelt in the catalogue.

HOW IT HAPPENED

In August 1974 a number of Sydney women film makers and interested women formed a group to plan and budget for a women's international film festival.

The Film and Television Board of the Australian Council for the Arts then advanced a loan of \$20,000 to finance initial organising, including sending two representatives overseas to see and choose women's films from as many countries as possible.

In March 1975, the National Advisory Committee for International Women's Year guaranteed the festival against loss up to \$35,000.

The first news of the festival reached New Zealand in September 1974. It was immediately obvious that everything possible should be done to extend the films here.

Initial organisation was done by a very small group of women scattered throughout New Zealand. A grant of \$5000 was received from the New Zealand International Women's Year Committee. The Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council has given a guarantee against loss of up to \$1200.

Four women travelled to the Sydney venue of the Australian International Women's Film Festival to preview films.

Following this initial organisation committees were set up in each of the centres, each involving the help and co-operation of a wide circle of people. The following list gives the main co-ordinators in each centre and they are listed here as contacts for any women who wish to extend their knowledge of video and/or film at a workshop level following the festival.

Auckland
Robin Scholes
Dept. of Art History
University of Auckland
Ph 74.740 ext 9260.

Hamilton
Sarah Calvert
12 Bond St,
Ph 53.472

Hawkes Bay
Jenny Sale,
D.B. Heretunga Hotel,
Hastings.
Ph 66066

Wellington
Dianne Robson, Chrissie Bauld,
11 Terrace Gardens,
Ph 849.476

Christchurch
Anita Narbey,
32 Leitch St,
Ph 34370

Dunedin
Adrienne Martyn,
549 Great King St
Ph 78025

CATALOGUE

Kate JasonSmith
Robin Scholes

photographs copied by Fiona Clarke
bromides Dianne Robson
printed by John Milne Ltd.

Acknowledgements

Australian International Women's Film Festival
British Film Institute notes on women and film from Angie Martin
Filmmaker's Newsletter
Women and Film magazine.
International Women's Year Committee
Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council
New Zealand University Students' Association
New Zealand Federation of Film Societies

The New Zealand Women's Film Festival Inc. wishes to thank the women's organisations throughout New Zealand for their united effort towards making this festival happen.

Interior *International Women's Film Festival* catalogue, Aotearoa New Zealand
1975.

SPIRAL'S CONNECTIONS TO MOVING IMAGE

When Spiral's founder, poet Heather McPherson, spoke about our beginnings in 1975 to Tilly Lloyd, for *A Women's Picture Book*, she said that *Spiral* was based on 'the idea of women working together for women's voices to be heard, positively... and the amalgam of arts — photographers as well as poets, writers, painters, etc'.^c

Heather didn't mention moving image. But if the group, if women in general, had then had access to movie cameras and/or smart phones and if print could have embedded moving images, film would of course have been included.

Joanna Harris (Joanna Margaret Paul), one of the founding members of the women artists group that preceded Spiral, did have access to a super-8 camera and she made some beautiful short films. In an early demonstration of the Spiral practice of making an active response to the perennial 'What If?' question, she also, on behalf of the women artists group, wrote to the local film society and suggested that it show slides of women's art before screenings.^d She received a positive initial response, but the archives don't tell us what happened next.

Later, Nancy Peterson and Kanya Stewart of Auckland Community Women's Video came to Wellington when the Women's Gallery opened in 1980 and recorded interviews, events and contextual footage that we treasure.^e

^c *A Women's Picture Book: 25 women artists of Aotearoa New Zealand*, edited by Bridie Lonie, Marian Evans & Tilly Lloyd (1988), 40.

^d For an example of 'What if?' questions that are part of Spiral's practices see 'Remembering Spiral, 2015-2022', *Spiral Collectives* <https://medium.com/spiral-collectives/in-review-spiral-2015-2021-b9e222e30601>

^e <https://medium.com/spiral-collectives/auckland-womens-community-video-2beebdf6da09>

And, inevitably, when digital cameras became affordable in the 1990s, and capable of generating 'broadcast quality' images, Spiral bought one to record some individuals we cherished. The project, called 'Getting Free', included Allie Eagle; Galvan Macnamara (James Mack); Heather herself; Irihapeti Ramsden; Keri Hulme; Miriama Evans; Wai Turoa Morgan; their associates; and others.^f

Alison Laurie, the ever-supportive senior lecturer at Women's Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, provided Spiral with a room and access to the university's resources while we worked. We also completed a feature documentary about Galvan: *Sister Galvan*, and launched it as part of a women's film festival in 2003, co-ordinated by Erica Duthie and me.^g

Held at the City Gallery in Wellington Te Whanganui-a-Tara, and named *Mabi Ata: Mabi Abua Women's Work in Film* by Keri Hulme, a trained television director herself, the festival included around 50 films made by women based in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Tim Wong at the *Lumière Reader*^h kindly produced a zine-type catalogue for us and we generated an associated database, now archived on the Wayback Machine.ⁱ

Here it is.

^f Most of those mini-DV tapes are now in the Alexander Turnbull Library and some of them have unfortunately deteriorated: we had been told they would be more stable than earlier videotapes but alas it seems they weren't.

^g It showed 50 short films, documentaries and experimental works by New Zealand women directors at City Gallery, Te Whānganui-a-Tara, Wellington.

^h <https://www.lumiere.net.nz/>

ⁱ https://web.archive.org/web/20130318024613/http://www.vuw.ac.nz/staff/marian_evans/women-filmmaker/index.html (single link)



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CITY GALLERY, WGN

LUMIERE

**Mahi ata mahi ahua:
WOMEN'S WORK IN FILM**

SEPTEMBER 18-21

GEOGRAPHICALLY A LONG-TIME ISOLATE from the cultural centres of the world, New Zealand will remain one of the most isolated in terms of the amount of cinematic content it does, punctuated every calendar year by a steady flow of high-profile and more modestly situated film festivals, showcases and the occasional retrospective.

New Zealand, of course, has forged its own intricate identity and nationalisms out of this isolation; in part, represented by its rich but often inconspicuous film history. Yet, when many of us gravitate towards the surplus of international festival samplings, or grudge in anticipation when it takes an entire year for the new David Lynch film to reach our shores, we seem to either forget or neglect the fact that New Zealanders, too, make films.

MAHI ATA MAHI AHUA: WOMEN'S WORK IN FILM is one festival that intends to remind us of our national film heritage. In particular, the role that women have played in shaping the discourse of New Zealand cinema. From the 18-21 September, showcasing over 30 short films, documentaries and features, the festival is a celebration not only of 10 years of Women's Suffrage, but of using New Zealanders who have helped create and dictate the character of filmmaking in this country.

While many of these films deal directly with issues of feminism, lesbianism and female empowerment, it would be unfair to judge the festival with the assumption that it might be nothing more than a staunch gathering of feminists and female libertarians. Rather, it's important to stress that this is an eclectic programme of New Zealand films - from the experimental, to the pioneering, to the challenging - many of which are rarely seen and widely unavailable. More than anything, it's a belated opportunity to sample the largely unknown side of New Zealand film in its rightful place - projected and in the dark.

Lumiere is proud to support MAHI ATA MAHI AHUA: WOMEN'S WORK IN FILM as part of an ongoing association with local and national film-related events. For info, visit www.wgn.co.nz/women-film-festivals.

To reserve a seat, please email us: seats@lumiere.org.nz or seats@wgn.co.nz. We will email you a confirmation and a link to our website.

Your reservation will be held for you until 15 minutes before your session begins. On the day of the festival, please bring your confirmation and a valid photo ID.

Send the same information, a cheque and a self-addressed envelope to: **Women's Film Festival**, c/o Gender & Women's Studies, Victoria University PO Box 600 Wellington 6140.

Buy three tickets and get one FREE! \$12 for 3 (you choose) OR \$5 for a student with ID.

Please note: Credit card and EFTPOS facilities are unavailable at the City Gallery theatre.

For back issues, send a self-addressed and stamped envelope (A4 or larger) to: Lumiere Back Issues, 45 Lakewood Ave, Churton Park, Wellington, NZ.

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CONTACT: The Editor 45 Lakewood Ave, Churton Park, Wellington, NZ. Email: lumiere@paradise.net.nz or <http://lumiere.paradise.net.nz>

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PROGRAMME / 18-21 SEPT @ CITY GALLERY, WELLINGTON

THURSDAY 18TH SEPT

7:30 PM / OPENING NIGHT

• **Formerly Known as James Mack**
Martin Evans

FRIDAY 19TH SEPT

11 AM / EXPERIMENTA

• **Scratchings**
May Trubovich

• **Pinholes**
Michelle Menzies

• **You Too**
Shirley Zang

• **The Object of My Disput**
Catherine Rose

• **Everybody's Happy**
Catherine Rose

• **Eden**
May Trubovich

• **Shore**
Sally Rodwell

• **From Memory**
Zoe Roland

12:30 PM / NATIONAL TREASURE

• **John Benjamin**

• **The Railway Worker**
Margaret Thomson

• **Circus Roundabout**
Margaret Thomson

• **Direction**
Margaret Thomson

• **2:00 PM / MAHI ATA MAHI AHUA**

• **Mokopuna**
John Benjamin

• **The Millionaire**
Whana Fala

• **Sweetness**
Rachel Davies

• **Lucky's Alice**
Rachel Davies

• **Maroon Uma**
Justine Simms-Barton

• **1:15 PM / PSYCHOLOGICAL THEMES**

• **The Omenology**
Justine Simms-Barton

17-18 SEPT

• **Women on the Move**
Lisa Fraser

• **Even Dogs are Given Bones**
Carole Stewart

• **7:30 PM / A TASTE**

• **John Benjamin**

• **John Benjamin**

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17-18 SEPT

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FORMERLY KNOWN AS JAMES MACKAY (2003), which opens the festival, is a frontal and often confrontational "life-and-times" of gay art professional, visionary and educator Galvin Macmanis. Macmanis is a deeply personal film, in part because of actor Maria Evans' involvement with the subject as both narrator (both literally in voice-over and in responsibility for shaping his story) and friend. At its nucleus (one of the few feature-length films in this festival), this is a documentary as its strongest when Evans - like a friend - simply explains Macmanis is certainly forthcoming, if he'd almost like another "coming out" film, and the fact that the fact that Macmanis has become such a controversial medium seems to progress Macmanis into us even more than he might desire. It's a nice surprise, especially to see a subject so candidly embracing the presence of the camera on the night stand, yet equally opportunistic as to on the other (filming in the shower, for example). Pursued by long sequences where Macmanis is "let loose," the film is much like a personal "diary," contrasting the straight biographical aspects memorably with such instances as the filming in the ubiquitous public toilet (when he remembers her, he like buy a toy shop).

One of the more cerebral films of the festival, **EVEN DOGS ARE GIVEN BONES: EVEN WOMEN FIGHT BACK** (1994), has been shown regularly since its creation at Trade Union and women's groups (a firsthand account of solidarity for women's rights). This is a unique style of documentary that shows its age in a feminist hair style, yet the subject of early video technology in the 1970s that does the film much more than be attributed to the very nucleus of its institutionalization. It's a occupation of the Ranech film factory. Directed by Cawley Stewart, the conception of film is virtually participatory in the sense that as we view the documentary, we're essentially watching Stewart and her crew collaborate with the predominantly female prison for the right to redundancy pay. It's another

example of the documentary becoming more than simply the medium, always raises the question that if Stewart's record of the cause had been channelled through wider mainstream media circles at the time, would her "participation" have signified more than simply a subject?

For a more lingering account of New Zealand's short history, two films by Margaret Thomson - **CIRCUS** (1992) and **RAILWAY WORKERS** (1994) - both made during the post-war years, remain icons of national identity and are arguably the film pioneer's best known works. Thomson, of course, stands as one of New Zealand's great film directors; these two shorter films, while appearing somewhat out of place in the festival, are Thomson's first great insight beyond what is normally attributed to archival films. In this sense, deliberately emphasizing the documentation of people's lives over people's surroundings, Thomson is claiming to represent the ordinary. Thomson for this reason. Likewise, **RAILWAY WORKERS** tends to follow the workers as they return to the railway. Thomson form an integral part of the film, especially as they reveal how central they were to communities, socializing, the economy and life as a "Teezy" Thomson, however, is clearly more concerned with defining the New Zealanders, which in turn is what defines her film as a historical document and as unique filmic treasures.

A long-time film director, Margaret Thomson is better known as a film director. Her 1981 documentary, **TWO GALS FROM TUXEPA** (1981), remains relatively unseen - in part because TUXEPA's quiet voice to buy - is a defining reason for its obscurity.

Galvin Macmanis in **FORMERLY KNOWN** as JAMES MACKAY. *By Marian Evans*

Similarly, **A POINT OF VIEW** (1994) seems to be about a recognition or realization in the sense that as a photographer and artist, Grace is questioning her own understanding of photography as a medium of representation and mediation. This is a continuous task from the "point of view" of Grace's camera as she prepares to shoot portraits of Brian Lawrence, we're prompted into experiencing the camera as an eye that always sees, yet one that is manipulated through our own conscious control. Of course, that there are time-based images imposed on the point of view of a still photographic device suggests that Grace's epiphany is about the discovery of motion; that moving images are her own emancipation, and that the suspension of movement can change the film itself, as photography, as described by Walter Benjamin, is perhaps not so revealing of the unconscious and truth as one believed. Advancing these self-reflective notions, **Julianne Samuels** examines both her position as an artist (in the medium of film and video), and like Grace, her self-reflexive statements as a New Zealand woman. While it's not immediate (and not necessarily true), both **DURMA** (1991) and **PARABOLA** (1994) appear to refer to the same kind of change. **Durma**, for instance, maintains a dualistic narrative along the lines of her childhood, displacement and reconstruction. Specifically, it's about the to the displacement of Grace to New Zealanders at birth, but with a sort of change belonging, suggested through fragmented imagery and the threat of urban-space.

Parabola is a more experimental, Samuels' work of interweaving her presence in between the dark of the old and the new. As we view the relative reduction of archival footage (mostly from film), we're simultaneously disoriented by the early style of moving photography, seemingly appropriated straight out of an After Effects film. The text itself is ambiguous, although seems to be a series of intertextual connections; certainly, there appears to be allusions to the late Jean-Luc Godard (*Le GIGI*), the way it attempts to interpret cinema itself.

Game No. 2.



GAMES FOR MEN

FELINE SCRATCHINGS

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Because this film, above all, is a genuine, caring document of New Zealand's national identity, in its 40-year history as a national, France can lay claim to being worked with several documentary filmmakers the Mayra brothers of **Gracia** (1994) and **Gracia** (1994). Two Gals - a day-to-day account of Francis' two defiant sons Mayra and Mayra - has been a common with the Mayra's other celebrated document of the working class, **SALAMANDER**, although it hardly is. **Gracia**, of course, stands as one of New Zealand's great film directors; these two shorter films, while appearing somewhat out of place in the festival, are Thomson's first great insight beyond what is normally attributed to archival films. In this sense, deliberately emphasizing the documentation of people's lives over people's surroundings, Thomson is claiming to represent the ordinary. Thomson for this reason. Likewise, **RAILWAY WORKERS** tends to follow the workers as they return to the railway. Thomson form an integral part of the film, especially as they reveal how central they were to communities, socializing, the economy and life as a "Teezy" Thomson, however, is clearly more concerned with defining the New Zealanders, which in turn is what defines her film as a historical document and as unique filmic treasures.

A long-time film director, Margaret Thomson is better known as a film director. Her 1981 documentary, **TWO GALS FROM TUXEPA** (1981), remains relatively unseen - in part because TUXEPA's quiet voice to buy - is a defining reason for its obscurity.

Galvin Macmanis in **FORMERLY KNOWN** as JAMES MACKAY. *By Marian Evans*

Similarly, **A POINT OF VIEW** (1994) seems to be about a recognition or realization in the sense that as a photographer and artist, Grace is questioning her own understanding of photography as a medium of representation and mediation. This is a continuous task from the "point of view" of Grace's camera as she prepares to shoot portraits of Brian Lawrence, we're prompted into experiencing the camera as an eye that always sees, yet one that is manipulated through our own conscious control. Of course, that there are time-based images imposed on the point of view of a still photographic device suggests that Grace's epiphany is about the discovery of motion; that moving images are her own emancipation, and that the suspension of movement can change the film itself, as photography, as described by Walter Benjamin, is perhaps not so revealing of the unconscious and truth as one believed. Advancing these self-reflective notions, **Julianne Samuels** examines both her position as an artist (in the medium of film and video), and like Grace, her self-reflexive statements as a New Zealand woman. While it's not immediate (and not necessarily true), both **DURMA** (1991) and **PARABOLA** (1994) appear to refer to the same kind of change. **Durma**, for instance, maintains a dualistic narrative along the lines of her childhood, displacement and reconstruction. Specifically, it's about the to the displacement of Grace to New Zealanders at birth, but with a sort of change belonging, suggested through fragmented imagery and the threat of urban-space.

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A PARABOLA **RACHEL ALICE**

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OUT INTO THE BLUE & THE SCHMINKE BOX by Halima

Gopwonska-Coates, until the directors who will present

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BACK TO STUDY & INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISM

After these experiences, I applied to the script-writing MA course at the International Institute of Modern Letters, and progressed to a PhD, studying gender and feature film development in Aotearoa (2006-2009).

Because some women filmmakers here, like Gaylene Preston, Jane Campion, Merata Mita and Niki Caro were well-known and respected, it was then generally believed that in Aotearoa — unlike the rest of the world — women directors of feature films were well represented and well supported. But women directors I spoke with in 2008 articulated another reality. Fearing repercussions, none of them wanted to be named; and only one agreed to have her story recorded.

Thanks to generous access offered by the then-CEO, Ruth Harley, I then documented and analysed the New Zealand Film Commission's information relating to its funding applications and allocations. The results showed that women directors were grossly underrepresented in both. This was very unwelcome news to some, who wouldn't — for example — accept accurate information about institutional inequity 'from an aging hippy', and certainly weren't going to take action to change things. (Over time, the institutions caught up.)

At first I was lonely. Spiral was on hiatus. I needed peers, and was very happy when I met, on social media, wonderful women's film activists from around the world.

Spiral members have often but intermittently entered 'What if?' quests, by searching outside Aotearoa for community and adventure. In the 1970s, we engaged with activist women artists and writers through books and journals sent by friends travelling overseas and the stories and ideas they brought home, as Adrienne did from Sydney. Spiral Collective member Irihapeti Ramsden travelled to the United States in the early 80s, where she helped negotiate Keri

Hulme's *the bone people* contract with the Louisiana State University Press and met with members of the Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press in New York.^j In the 1980s and 90s Spiral members took local books to the international women's book fairs and even produced a catalogue to take, to introduce Aotearoa's women writers: *Wahine Kaituhi: Women Writers of Aotearoa*.^k

From about 2008, in the Twitter and Blogger heyday, it was a lot of fun, researching and writing my *WellywoodWoman* blog and having the opportunity to form relationships with and interview women filmmakers and activists from other countries.^l I especially loved the different ways people cherished both filmmakers who were women and those who were nonbinary people, sometimes described as, for example, gender unaligned people. New and explicit gender-expansive connections with and conversations with nonbinary people — who have always been represented within women's projects — enrich everyone, in my view, and I've been grateful for them. We were all engaged in 'the idea of women working together for women's voices to be heard, positively' and wherever we were based,

^j <https://daily.jstor.org/how-kitchen-table-press-changed-publishing/> Irihapeti was also a member of Haeata, a Māori women artists' collective, which hosted 'visiting indigenous women artists from England, North America, Honolulu and Australia. These contacts provided an opportunity to develop new networks, and some Haeata members visited these women in both formal and informal cultural exchanges' — Keri Kaa in 'Haeata' <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/women-together/haeata>

^k <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/about/library/spiral/wahine-kaituhi-women-writers-of-aotearoa> Writer Bub Bridger represented us at the 1st International Feminist Book Fair, London (1984); Arapera Blank, Heather McPherson, Irihapeti Ramsden, Jacque Sturm, Marian Evans, Patricia Grace and Stephanie Baxter at the 2d, in Oslo (1986); Irihapeti Ramsden and Marian Evans at the 4th, Barcelona (1990).

^l Key interviews and articles from wellywoodwoman.blogspot are now at <https://medium.com/women-filmmakers-interviews>, <https://medium.com/womens-film-activism> and <https://medium.com/womeninfilm-databases-festivals>. I was also contracted by Eurimages to do a series of interviews with Europe-based women directors, and was delighted that, when I was interviewed for IndieWire, I could appear with Spiral connections Allie Eagle and Cushla Parekowhai: <https://www.indiewire.com/features/general/heroin-es-of-cinema-why-dont-more-women-make-movies-marian-evans-on-bridging-the-gap-between-theory-and-practice-28702/>

it seemed to me that many of us believed that women's film festivals were providing a similar kind of the awhi embrace and tautoko support that Spiral has always aimed to offer.

We also believed that collective activities could affect institutional practices. For instance, in May 2017, when distinguished Palestinian filmmaker Annemarie Jacir missed a meeting at the Cannes Film Festival because her one-year old didn't have the official badge required for children and dogs,^m a small group of us — Alexandra Hidalgo from *agnès films*, Barbara Ann O'Leary from *Directed By Women*, Mathilde Dratwa from *Moms in Film*, So Mayer from *Raising Films* and I, each living in a different time zone, organised a petition to present to the festival, in support of Annemarie and other filmmakers at Cannes with children. It made a difference.ⁿ Five months later the #MeToo hashtag, first used back in 2006 by sexual assault survivor and activist Tarana Burke,^o went viral, following numerous accusations of sexual assault by an American producer, now incarcerated. And change accelerated, globally.

CHANGE COMES TO AOTEAROA, LED BY WĀHINE MĀORI

In the meantime, there'd been a crucial shift in Aotearoa. At the 2015 edition of the screen industry's Big Screen Symposium, supported by other wāhine Māori, with great courage, Chelsea Winstanley said, as reported in a series of tweets —

The NZFC should make a commitment to funding as many female filmmakers as male...We should all be challenging the NZFC to

^m <https://medium.com/womeninfilmm-databases-festivals/cannes2017-excludes-womeninfilmm-who-bring-their-children-a26fc7b070fi>

ⁿ <https://www.raisingfilms.com/press-the-hollywood-reporter/>; <https://agnesfilms.com/female-filmmakers/parents-in-the-palais-an-open-letter-to-the-cannes-film-festival/>.

^o https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarana_Burke

support gender equality in the film industry...Women experience things men can't... like giving birth *points to new baby*.



L_R Karin Williams, Briar Grace-Smith, Libby Hakaraia, Chelsea Winstanley with baby.

In that context — see more, in Part III below — these were powerful statements, never before made publicly by women filmmakers living and working here.^P

Change continued to be slow. But two years later, the *Waru*, the first feature written and directed by wāhine Māori since Merata Mita's *Mauri* in 1988, debuted at the Toronto Film Festival before opening the 2017 imagineNATIVE film festival and then in cinemas in Aotearoa. *Waru* is a portmanteau film with eight directors.^Q

#DIRECTED BY WOMEN: SPIRAL RETURNS

Unsurprisingly in this overall context, Barbara Ann O'Leary's *Directed By Women* project inspired me, with its annual worldwide

^P Jane Campion, who wasn't dependent on financing from within Aotearoa, had spoken about the issues, but usually generally and globally.

^Q Toronto 2017 was just before #MeToo broke; imagineNATIVE was just after.

film viewing party each September, a party 'inviting the world to fall madly in love with films #DirectedbyWomen'.

From 2018 — the 125th anniversary of women's suffrage in Aotearoa New Zealand — until 2020 and Covid, I co-ordinated a series of 'pop-up' film screenings, with strong and generous support from early Spiral collective member the late Lynne Ciochetto (1950-2024), and others listed below in the acknowledgments. These screenings were at Parliament, Park Road Post and Te Auaha in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington; Rialto Cinemas, Newmarket, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland; and at Māoriland, in Ōtaki. Some of the work was locally made, some came from women directors overseas. Where possible the screenings were free, in line with Spiral's long practice of making women's creative work accessible to all.

The selection of work highlighted themes that reflected Spiral's consistent interests and individual members' lived experience: the lives of women workers (*Even Dogs Are Given Bones* and *Minimum*) — Heather came from the working class, as did and do other Spiral workers; transformation of representation (*Women & Webseries*; *Rafiki*; *Radiogram*; *13th*); activism and justice (*Even Dogs Are Given Bones*; *Minimum*; *Radiogram*; *Rafiki*, *13th*, *Women & Webseries*).

The documentation included in Part III, of ephemera, articles, and interviews with filmmakers reflects Spiral's practice of always offering context. This material was usually first published in *WellywoodWoman* and then on *Medium*, where I was @devt, my Twitter handle for film activism work; when Heather McPherson later became very ill I added a Spiral open research publication there, where she and others contributed stories of lived experience that might otherwise have been lost.¹

¹ <https://medium.com/spiral-collectives>

WOMEN'S FILM ACTIVISM TODAY & AOTEAROA'S PROGRESS

Globally, in 2025, the world of women's film activism is now very different. It appears that what survives, including film festivals and databases has largely become institutionalised and professionalised. And arguably less influential. In my 2021 Afterword, below, I was optimistic. But with some exceptions (what about *Barbie*?!) progress has now stalled.^s For instance, actor Cate Blanchett appears to be referring to more than sexual harassment when she says, in 2025—

Everyone talks about the #MeToo movement as if it's well and truly over, and I think, well, it didn't really ever take root, to be honest. People were seeking to dismantle and discredit those voices that were only just beginning to come out from under the floorboards into the light. I find it quite distressing the way that it hasn't taken root.^t

Aotearoa's progress is unique, with continuing vibrant contributions from wāhine Māori filmmakers. I can no longer be sure I have a comprehensive list, and I imagine there will be lots of work in series, including webseries, that I've missed. But in 2024/5 new narrative and documentary features include Josephine Stewart-Te Whiu's *We Were Dangerous* (winner of the SXSW Special Jury Award, among others, in 2024 and about to be released in the United States); Kath Akuhata-Brown's *Kōkā*; Katie Wolfe's *The Haka Party*; Rachel House's *The Mountain*; Whetū Fala's *Taki Rua Theatre – Breaking Barriers*; and, led by Tweedie Waititi, Chelsea Winstanley

^s One advantage of the professionalism is consistent, funded, academic research, like Stacy L Smith's ongoing study of top-grossing narrative features, which tends to show little improvement for women directors in general and 'no evidence of progress for women of color': <https://www.indiewire.com/news/general-news/2025-inclusion-in-the-directors-chair-study-change-1235081148/> (for 2024).

^t <https://www.net-a-porter.com/en-gb/porter/article-cdd49d13f25dc6d5/cover-stories/cover-stories/cate-blanchett>

and Mārama Henry-Teirney, Matewa Media's ongoing production of Disney animations in te reo — five so far, with the latest released simultaneously with the English version. Alongside these, Loren Taylor's award-winning *The Moon is Upside Down* (2023) was nominated in this year's Online Film Critics Society Awards, among ten international films recognised as Best Non-United States releases.^u There's also Sasha Rainbow's *Grafted*; Christine Jeff's *A Mistake*; and Lucy Lawless's *Never Look Away*.^v

And there's lots more on their way: just thrilling, including Chelsea Winstanley's *TOITŪ Visual Sovereignty* and Paula Whetu Jones' *The Doctor's Wife*.

I doubt that we need a women's film festival in Aotearoa — though it'd be beautiful thing. But I'm glad to update this handbook, to acknowledge our local past, to celebrate our present and to cherish and support the hard and necessary work that continues within women's film festivals and databases in other parts of the world.

15 August 2025

^u It also won Best First Feature at the prestigious Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival and the Special Jury Award at the Santa Fe International Film Festival.

^v Of examples on smaller screens, is Rautini O'Brien's *Ngā Kōtiro o Taranaki*, an animated television series based on a war crime; and *After the Party*, created by actor Robyn Malcolm and writer Dianne Taylor, has had international success.

OVERVIEW 2025 EDITION

This second edition of the handbook has three main parts. The first two, as in 2021, are the Festival List and the #WomenInFilm Database List. The new third part, #DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa, provides a local context.

My only fresh research for the Festival List and the #WomenInFilm Databases List attempted to establish which festivals and databases continue and to consult again with two ever-generous experts, Beti Ellerson, who added two African festivals, and Luísa Pécora, who updated the Latin American information. My best thanks to you both.

The process wasn't straightforward. Sometimes, from information on social media or a website, it seemed that a festival was defunct. But further checks showed that it wasn't. On other occasions it seemed that a festival is or might be only in hiatus. The same for one or two of the databases.

There's no doubt that Covid has disrupted women's film festivals globally and was particularly harsh on those with 'Feminist' in their titles, unless they are attached to an institution (eg Davis Feminist

Film Festival) or engage in activities beyond their festival (Dispatch/Feminist Moving Image; Drunk Feminist Films). Valete, haere rā, farewell, Central Illinois Feminist Film Festival (Charleston, Illinois, US); Chicago Feminist Film Festival (Chicago, Illinois, US); Festival de Films Féministes de Montréal / Montreal Feminist Film Festival (Montreal, Canada); Berlin Feminist Film Week; Dublin Feminist Film Festival (Éire); Femspectives — Glasgow Feminist Film Festival (Scotland, website now an archive); London Feminist Film Festival (London UK); RVK Feminist Film Festival (Reykjavík, Ísland). You're missed.

Of course I had to check if there are any new festivals with 'feminist' in their titles. And yes, I found some, as well as two I missed in 2021. 'Feminist' is an enduring F-word that stimulates activity all over the place. Salvete, kia ora, welcome—

- Bucharest Feminist Film Festival which is 'an invitation to explore, reflect on and challenge traditional representations of CARE, often assigned to the domestic sphere and undervalued' (Romania, in its 5th year);
- CinéFemFest — Gëstu Naataal i Jigeen; African Feminist Film Festival Festival to research and celebrate African cinema from a feminist angle; le Festival Africain de film & recherche féministes (Senegal).^a



^a <https://cinefemfest.com/the-film-festival/>

- Feminist Border Arts Film Festival (at New Mexico State University, New Mexico for a decade, missed in research for the last edition);
- Hakkebush Feminist Film Festival, based in Kyiv, Ukraine, which aims ‘to inspire Ukrainian and European female filmmakers who are just starting out in the cinema to be bold in their work and to express themselves’;
- Les Mains Gauches — Queer Feminist Short Movies (Marseille, France), a ‘five-days festival of short films and artistic researches about our stories of struggles and identities, exploring our representations and their limits, echoing our joys, our fears, our friendships’, also celebrating its 5th edition;
- Red Dawns International Feminist and Queer Festival (Ljubljana, Slovenia), which wants to create ‘a safer space to collectively discuss and reflect on pornography, sexuality and sexual identity from feminist and queer perspectives [and] warmly embrace[s] all genres and on-screen media that are brimming with visions, reflections, community, and imagination’. Established in 2000.

There’ll be others I haven’t found. Long may you all last.

Because Vellum (the software that generates this publication) doesn’t yet take embedded links into its .pdf format, I’ve removed most links to e.g. social media and replaced some links with URLs, prioritising worldwide sources. One useful URL is for Film Freeway, where there are some new festivals to find if you search ‘women’, as well as ‘feminist’: <https://filmfreeway.com/>. Film Freeway is also as likely to inform about a festival’s status as individual festival websites and social media accounts.

In general I’ve kept the 2021 posters, to reflect that herstory.

PART I: THE FESTIVAL LIST

Part 1 provides an introduction, written in 2021, that offers some context, followed by a comprehensive list of over 160 women's film festivals. The list is for filmmakers looking for community and audiences; and for people who want to watch women filmmakers' work. It includes a group of specialist worldwide resources that can help you to curate your own festivals, at home and in your communities.

After the worldwide resource list, the festivals are grouped according to geographical regions – Africa, Asia, Canada & the United States, Central & South America, Europe, Oceania – and then alphabetically within their region.

I've tried – and not always succeeded – to give each festival equal attention and space and to use their own words where I can. Where a festival is part of a complex year-long programme I've sometimes given it more space.

Originally I sometimes included a festival if it was still listed on **filmfreeway**, **festagent** or **festhome** or was active on social media, even though I couldn't find a recent or forthcoming edition and was unable to communicate with any organisers.

Occasionally I didn't translate from the primary language of the festival; and I've never noted where a festival offers awards – quite a lot of them do.

Each festival's Covid status is described as 'IRL' (in real life); 'hybrid' (IRL and online); or 'virtual' (all online). Sometimes I've added information that reflects the volatile Covid environment. According to Beti Ellerson many women's festivals in Africa do not have the means to assure continuity since Covid began, so instead of having a website they rely on social media, especially Facebook, to communicate. This seems true in other parts of the world too and for many festivals, the most up-to-date information is now on their Facebook

page. But Facebook is not universally a good source of information. For instance, Luísa Pécora notes that not many people in Brazil use it anymore; now it's usually Instagram, TikTok and WhatsApp.

Note: There's some crossover with queer festivals. In 2025 I'm sad that Mel Pritchard's marvellous and definitive **Big Queer Film Festival List** has now gone, but there's a basic list on Wikipedia and, again, Film Freeway is also useful.

PART II THE #WOMENINFILM DATABASES LIST

Part 2 has its own introduction, and lists #WomenInFilm databases and other useful resources, primarily for professional filmmakers who want a platform among other women, where they can demonstrate that they are skilled and available. It's also for those who want to find these filmmakers and offer them work. It is in two sections, a general section and a cinematographer section.

PART III #DIRECTEDBY WOMEN #AOTEAROA

Part III is a collection of articles about #DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa, now part of Spiral's herstory; it is also a tribute to Barbara Ann O'Leary's extraordinary global project.

I've had some great help. But there will be errors and they are all mine.

– Marian Evans

Part One

WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVALS



INTRODUCTION – 2021

BACKGROUND

Women's film festivals and specialist organizations that distribute women's films have been around for a long time and among the distributors Women Make Movies is an extraordinary resource if you want to create a festival. It turned 50 in 2022.

Some festivals have come and gone. Others, like Festival International de Films de Femmes (Paris, France), Festival di Cinema e Donne Firenze (Florence, Italy) are in their fifth decade. Women Make Waves (Taichung, Taiwan), St John's International Women's Film Festival (Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada), Cineffable (also Paris) are in their fourth. The Seoul International Women's Film Festival (Seoul, Korea), Sguardi Altrove Film Festival (Milan, Italy) Uçan Süpürge International Women's Film Festival/ Flying Broom International Women's Film Festival (Ankara, Turkey) are in their third.

Visionary filmmaker and entrepreneur Ava DuVernay has often spoken about 'building our own house and having our own door' and the festivals and resources in this handbook do just this for people

who love women's cinema. They're vital to the development and wellbeing of women's filmmaking communities and they attract and grow eager and informed audiences.

Until Covid, I was keen to encourage women's film festival tourism. But for now, as many festivals become virtual or hybrid, I delight in new opportunities to participate in festivals I could never hope to visit. Without having to travel beyond my sofa.

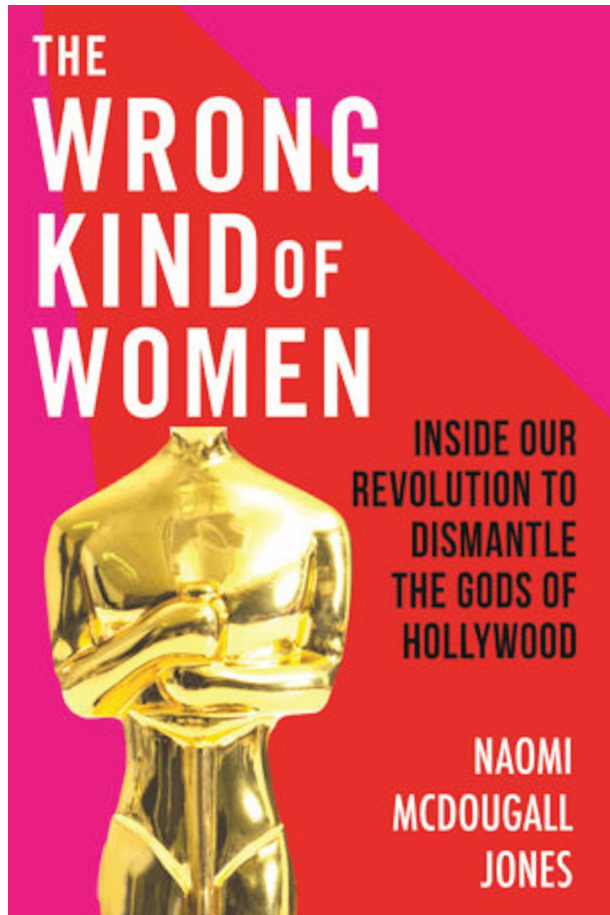
Many films screened at the virtual festivals are geoblocked and available only to people living in the festival's locality - the festivals cannot afford to buy the rights to make the films more widely available. But often associated Q&As, discussions and workshops are accessible to all. And they're often inspiring.

THE CONTEXT: WOMEN FILMMAKERS STRUGGLE

There's now broader awareness of the complex equity issues facing women filmmakers, of gender fluidity and of women's diversity. More actions that reflect commitments to inclusion for all.

But although their working conditions have improved a little, in many places, women and nonbinary filmmakers almost always find it more difficult than men to find resources to do their work effectively and be paid fairly. It's usually even more difficult for those who are also of colour, are indigenous, disabled, queer, poor; and those who have caring responsibilities. And, when we do make films, we will probably struggle to exhibit and distribute them effectively.

In her magnificent book about women in film, *The Wrong Kind of Women* (2020), Naomi McDougall Jones cites Deb Verhoeven's research, done in 2016. It showed that, globally, women directed only 16% of all feature films distributed *in any way at all*. Women directed *only* 2% of all the films released in theaters. That may not have changed much. And other opportunities to see women's films are uneven, in contemporary film festivals and online.



WOMEN-DIRECTED FILMS IN CONTEMPORARY FESTIVALS

Women-directed films are now more often selected for film festivals. Thanks to The Collective 50/50 many major festivals have agreed to work towards gender parity.^a

^a <https://collectif5050.com/en/home/>



Other festivals established in the last decade, like Aotearoa New Zealand’s Māoriland (Ōtaki), consistently select equal numbers of films directed by women and by men.^b But there’s still work to do.

The Time’s Up Foundation and the USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative studied representation in five major film festivals 2017–2019 (Berlin International Film Festival; Cannes Film Festival; Sundance Film Festival; Toronto International Film Festival; Venice International Film Festival) and found that 71% of the directors of selected narrative films were men; and 62% of all directors were white (but see the changes documented below, in the Afterword).^c

^b <https://maorilandfilm.co.nz/>

^c 2025; link to research broken.



Pins available from Le Collectif 50/50

ONLINE PLATFORMS (NOT UPDATED IN 2025)

Some general online platforms are incidental resources for women's filmmaking, for self-curated festivals at home.

Kanopy is a free service through many libraries worldwide and last time I counted our local Kanopy has 655 directed-by-women films available.

MUBI has lists of films directed by women, but a limited selection available for screening.

A Netflix search for films 'directed by women' used to include films directed by men. But today – in Aotearoa New Zealand – my latest search shows 300 available that truly are women-directed. So that's good(ish) news.

In contrast, when I searched 'directed by women' on Amazon it offered 948 movies. But many of them were 'about' women and directed by men. HBO shows no results for 'directed by women' or 'directed by women movies'. I couldn't search Disney+ without having a subscription.

In this overall context, the work of women's film festivals is indispensable.

WHAT WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVALS DO

Women's film festival screenings and associated events provide rich experiences, for film practitioners and audiences.

Usually organized primarily by volunteers, they offer opportunities for filmmakers to share their work, their ideas and their skills with one another as well as audiences.

The festivals may showcase only local women filmmakers' work, or include national and/or international films and filmmakers. They are immensely varied and may screen recent and/or historical work. They may focus on thematic and genre options like women in horror; women in sport; women leaders; queer women; or women and justice.

Some have a different theme each year. They may also screen only some kinds of films: animation; short films; documentaries; music videos etc. Often, they screen films that will never make it to a nearby cinema or be readily available online.

The festivals usually also offer information, workshops and seminars that include discussion about factors that specifically affect and are affected by women and women filmmakers. IFFF Dortmund+Köln has made a beautiful clip about Why Women's Film Festivals are Important Now featuring women from 18 festivals.^d

I love what renowned British director Andrea Arnold wrote about her experience at one of the 'grandmother' festivals, Festival International de Films de Femmes in Créteil, Paris, ages ago. She'd always noticed how few films by women there are at 'general' film festivals and when she went to Créteil with *Wasp* – for which she won an Academy Award – she stayed on for a few days and watched 'all these films by women'. This is what happened:

^d 2021, link now dead.

‘I spent the whole time crying because there were so many films that had so much resonance for me, being female. It actually made me realise how male-dominated the film industry is in terms of perspective.

If you think about a film being a very popular and expressive way of showing a mirror on life, we’re getting a mainly male perspective. It’s a shame. I saw a lot of fantastic films at Créteil that I never heard about again.’^e



*Internationales Frauenfilmfestival/ International
Women's Film Festival 2021 (Germany)*

THE COVID EFFECT

From 2020, Covid profoundly affected women's film festivals.

Some 2020 festivals happened before Covid took hold. Some lost so much funding that they couldn't go on.

Others pivoted to virtual screenings and events. Although, as already noted, they often have to geoblock films (so are not listed in the

^e <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2009/aug/23/andrea-arnold-fish-tank-cannes>

Worldwide section below) these festivals' virtual events are usually available to all. And those online events are very varied.

Female Voices Rock's dynamic experience probably wasn't unique —

'When we made the decision to go virtual... we didn't really know what to expect. Fast forward 6 months, we are immensely proud to announce that what could have broken us, actually made us stronger, and this year we have 70+ of the best women-made short films the world has to offer, as well as 7 days of panels and workshops with leading industry experts from Sony Pictures, NBC, Blumhouse (and much more), Q&As, networking events, happy hours, and parties!'



Female Voices Rock Film Festival

Some women's events that include a women's filmmaking element also went online, like this one connected to the now-defunct Hong Kong Women's Film Festival.



Hong Kong Women's Film Festival at the Women's Festival 2020

Other 'one-off' festivals were interrupted or postponed, like the Korean Women Independent Film Series, exploring the recent wave of women independent cinema.



Thanks to the Anna Lindh Foundation,^f the Olhares do Mediterrâneo - Women's Film Festival in Portugal expanded to a rich networking and training programme 'Awareness and Empowerment', collaborating with Films Femmes Méditerranée (France), Some Prefer Cake – Bologna Lesbian Film Festival (Italy), Beirut Film Society and Films Femmes Francophones Méditerranée (Lebanon, a screenwriting residency that in the past also held a festival), Association de Culture et d'Education par l'Audiovisuel (Morocco), Shashat (Palestine), Mostra Internacional de Films de Dones de Barcelona (Spain) and Uçan Süpürge International Women's Film Festival/ Flying Broom International Women's Film Festival (Turkey).

There have been online opportunities to share ideas about women's film festivals, too.

^f <https://alf.website/>



But some festivals didn't have the resources to pivot to a virtual programme. Or they presented hybrid festivals, partly online, partly in real life, sometimes in partnership with local cinemas (Bloody Mary in Canada, Female Filmmakers Festival in Berlin), a museum (Women's Museum of California), or a drive-in cinema (London Lesbian Film Festival). URUSARO International Women Film Festival (Rwanda) broadcast their programme on TV.



Some Prefer Cake goes online

Some Prefer Cake's message to its audience when it went online offers a message that may be typical of all these staunch festivals —

'We want to thank you all and tell you that we miss you. We miss the festival as we always have, we miss hugs, last minute setups, the many women who come from different parts of Italy and find themselves at Nosadella cinema, every year. We miss voices, chaos, late hours, sleepy breakfasts after party, music, dancing. We miss the soul of the festival that is all the women and subjectivity that support and live it.'

Regardless of how each festival responded to Covid, I was truly impressed by their creativity, energy and commitment, their persistence when facing multiple challenges.

Just amazing.



I loved this marketing idea from the Assen Festival, in the Netherlands, offering goodies for at-home audiences.

A big welcome to all these festivals, continuing to maintain and extend their beautiful and diverse self-built houses – large and small, with singular nooks and crannies, unique inhabitants and their

chosen furniture! And to you, as a filmmaker or audience member!
Make yourself at home!

NOTE

There were many more links available here in the 2021 edition; they're gone in 2025 because the software used doesn't provide embedded links in .pdfs.

WORLDWIDE

Directed By Women (<https://directedbywomen.com/>)



Annual celebration, created by Barbara Ann O'Leary. All September. Every September. You choose how you want to celebrate, wherever you are: organise solo celebrations, house parties, twitter chats, community screenings, festivals, panels, etc.

Look around in your community and get something going? (In Aotearoa New Zealand, I organise a series of pop-up #DirectedByWomen events, sometimes outside September.)

The **Directed by Women** site also provides a list of Crucial 21st Century Cinema by women, with links to where the films are available.

2025: Barbara has finished her amazing work but it's likely some #DirectedByWomen events will continue. #DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa ended at the first Covid lockdown, but could be revived at any time!

Dispatch | Feminist Moving Image (London & Edinburgh UK, <https://www.dispatchfmi.com/>)

An intersectional feminist moving image curatorial practice & online platform, with a focus on works created by women. Aims is to bring feminist cinema and theory to all by making screenings accessible, affordable, and educational. Also, a journal, **Dispatch**.

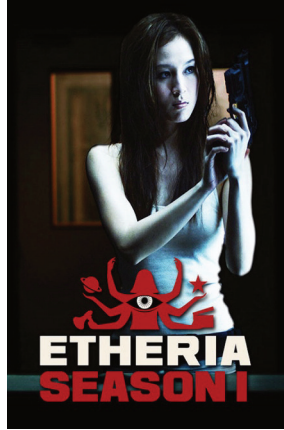


2025: Continuing.

Etheria TV Series (<https://thehorrorcollective.com/tv/etheria-season-1>)

The Horror Collective is releasing six seasons of **Etheria**, an anthology series of stand-alone short horror, science fiction, fantasy, action, and thriller episodes directed by women. It's inspired by the

Etheria Film Festival's programming and created to introduce amazing directors to devoted genre fans.



2025: Now a boutique distribution company, releasing features.

Femflix

Developed in response to the rise of the #MeToo and #TimesUp movement. Aims to engage, educate, and influence audiences and content creators about the importance of eliminating unconscious bias, highlighting gender balance, challenging stereotypes, creating role models and scripting a wide variety of strong female characters in entertainment and media. Stories about women, made by women. 24/7 access to premium, female-centred, highly curated entertainment on-demand. Australia-based.



2025: Defunct but still on social media.

Global Girl Media (GGM, <https://globalgirlmedia.org/>)

Changing the face of media by putting girls behind the camera and at the center of the story. Develops the voice of young women, ages 15-25, in underserved communities by teaching them to create and share digital journalism designed to break gender boundaries, ignite community activism and spark change. Lots of online content as well as festival(s).



A new GGM UK virtual festival 2021.

2025: Continuing.

Herflix (<https://www.herflix.com/>)

The online movie theatre with films about, for & by women. The many voices of women filmmakers need a special home. **Herflix** sees content through a lens that shows HER point of view, consciousness, and intuition.

Includes Women in Film & Television International Shorts.

2025: Continuing, but no longer adding new content?

HERFLIX

. . .

MOM Filmfest (<https://www.momfilmfest.org/>)

Online short-form fest dedicated to elevating and celebrating filmmakers who are mothers. Our Mission #LeaveNoMomBehind

Story-based projects in the form of narrative (fiction) or documentary (non fiction) films and series that feature moms in leadership positions – writers, directors, producers, and cinematographers. Short projects (up to 30 min): narrative, documentary, series, mom-themed, and social justice.

2025: Continuing.

**Reel Girls Film Festival** (<https://www.reelgirlsfilmfestival.com/>)

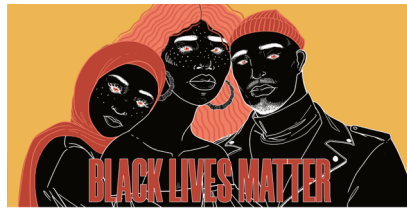
All-girls international student film festival, devoted entirely to encouraging and supporting young female filmmakers.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: most recent festival 2023.

Sisterhood Media TV

Streaming platform: short films, web series, documentaries, and more.



Part of Sisterhood Media, dedicated to stories on identity. Produces content, hosts events, and distributes. Committed to keeping media accessible. Operates from many locations but primarily the traditional lands of the anishinawbe, haudenosaunee confederacy, missisaugas of the credit, and huron-wendat nation.

Final year: 2022.

Voice of a Woman (<https://www.thevoiceofawoman.com/>)

Celebrates creativity with a bold and innovative program featuring the works of creative women globally. Has delivered programmes in Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, United Kingdom and the United States.



2025: Continuing.

Women in Horror Month #WiHM (<https://www.womeninhorrormonth.com/>)

International grassroots initiative encouraged supporters to learn about and showcase the underrepresented work of women in the horror industries: on the screen, behind the scenes, or contributing in other ways.

After 12 years, #WiHM announced that from 1 March 2021 there will no longer be an official WiHM organization. The organization believes there is enough content, traffic, and engagement to take celebrations year round and encourages the community to choose their own month to celebrate. The month that best fits their projects. February, March, October...doesn't matter. 'Leverage the reach you all have created by using the WiHM hashtag. Create your own groups and communities. Throw your own events (when it's safe to do so).'

2025: Website and store only?

. . .

Women Make Movies (<https://www.wmm.com>)

Founded 1972. The world's leading distributor of independent films by and about women. Not exactly a festival, but provides an extraordinary catalogue, a distribution service and production assistance. You can arrange to host a virtual screening!



Extensive experience working with universities, high schools, museums, art galleries, community organizations, religious organizations, corporations, public libraries, and more to offer film screenings both in-person and online.

Many options for diversity programming, virtual art exhibits, teaching online, or offering enrichment to patrons, including possibility of Q&A with filmmaker. 2-3 weeks processing time for international orders.

2025: Continuing.



Women's Voices Now (<https://www.womensvoicesnow.org/>)

Non-profit that uses film to drive positive social change that advances women's and girls' rights globally.

Promotes female and femme-identifying filmmakers. Free online archive all year.

Covid status: virtual 2022.

2025: Continuing.

AFRICA

Beti Ellerson's African Women in Cinema^a is the go-to source of up-to-date information about women's film festivals in Africa.^b Warm thanks to Beti for assistance with this region.

African Women Arts & Film Festival (AWAFFEST,
<http://www.awaffest.org/>) (Dar Es Salaam, Kenya)



^a <http://africanwomenincinema.blogspot.com/>

^b See also Beti's latest articles: 'African Women on the Film Festival Landscape' **Black Camera** vi2:1 Fall 2020 pp.59-89; and 'Fifty Years of Women's Engagement at FESPACO' **Black Camera** vi2:1 Fall 2020 pp.245-254.

Platform to appreciate the arts and stories of African women; to celebrate female film practitioners; and to empower aspiring artists.

Covid status: virtual.

2025: March this year (in Zambia 2023).

Cairo International Women's Film Festival/Between Women Filmmakers Caravan (Cairo, Egypt <http://cairowomen-filmfest.com/>)

Aims to strengthen an international network of women filmmakers from various regions of the world, especially in the Arab world, and contribute to advancing towards gender equality and interculturality. Runs a variety of activities.



Covid status: virtual.

2025: Continuing.

Festival Du Cinéma au Féminin - CINEF 2021 (Kinshasa, Congo)



Framework for promoting works produced and directed by women. Also celebrates cinema and culture: a rich and varied event where screenings, training workshops and professional meetings have a prominent place.

Covid status: IRL 2021. Theme: 'No Real Renaissance Until Women are Liberated'.

2025: Continuing, with website <https://cinef-festival.org/>.^c

. . .

^c Also, another festival with the similar name, Le Festival du Film au Féminin, in La Réunion <https://www.festivalfilmfeminin.com/>.

Le Festival International du Film de Femmes de Salé or FIFFS (Salé, Morocco <http://www.fiffs.ma/>)

Conçu au départ pour accueillir des films de réalisatrices, il accueille finalement aussi des films de réalisateurs, permettant ainsi au regard de réalisatrices et réalisateurs de se croiser sur les femmes.



Covid status: IRL 2021.

2025: Continuing.

Festival International de Films de Femmes de Cotonou (Cotonou, Benin <https://fiffcotonou.com/>)

Le premier festival de film béninois consacré aux femmes. Il met en lumière le travail des femmes cinéastes.



Covid status: IRL, postponed 2021.

2025: Continuing.

Festival Mwassi, les Films d'Afrique ô féminin (Brazzaville, Republic of Congo <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61576784656679>)



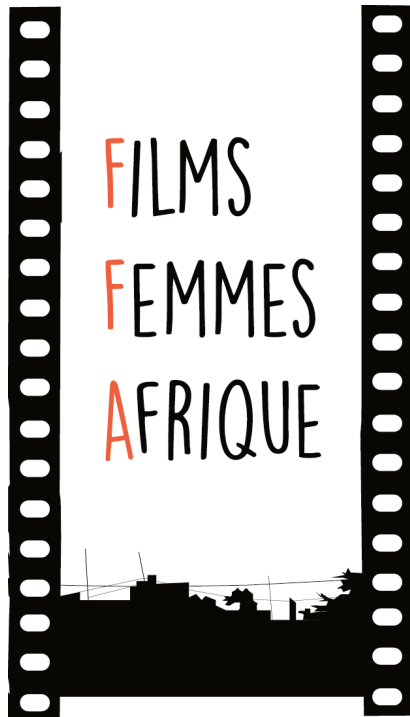
Mwassi met en lumière les femmes des cinémas d'Afrique, toutes professions confondues et à valoriser les créations locales.

2025: continuing.

Films Femmes Afrique (Dakar, Senegal & eight towns in the region <https://www.filmsfemmesafrique.com/>)

Part of an educational process. Highlights the movies (shorts and features, fictions and documentaries) dedicated to women of all Africa and its diaspora and celebrates the filmmakers who are interested in them.

Covid status: next edition 2022. Theme: Femmes Créatives d'Avenir.



2025: Continuing.

Holiday Market (Stone Town and West Town, Unguja, Zanzibar, Tanzania)

Exhibits and empowers women in film talents from across the African continent. Priority given to films from Africa and by Africans, on theme of women, or directed by women.



Covid status: postponed 2021.

2025: Defunct.



Mzansi Women's Film Festival (Johannesburg, South Africa)

Platform to empower women filmmakers by showcasing films by women and about women.

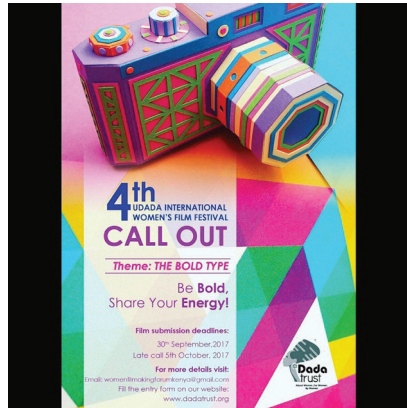
Creates an annual networking opportunity for women filmmakers to identify and access opportunities in the film industry, to facilitate access to training and/or development opportunities for women filmmakers and to recognise female filmmakers with an awards event.

Covid status: uncertain, ?virtual 2020?

2025: Most recent festival 2020 but still has Facebook page.

Udada International Women's Film Festival (Nairobi, Kenya)

About women, by women, for women. Aims to recognize women's participation, contribution to, and support of cinema internationally, and create and foster sisterhood(s) in film around the world. Runs workshops. Contributed films to Bamberger Kurzfilmtage (Germany) 2020.



Covid status: uncertain. Last fest late 2018.

2025: Most recent festival 2022, website gone.



URUSARO International Women Film Festival (Kigali, Rwanda, <http://www.cinefemmesrwanda.org/>)

Annual celebration and cultural exhibition that promotes women in cinema for the benefit of society and gender equality. Includes workshops. Created and managed by CinéFEMMES Rwanda.

Covid status: TV broadcast programme 2020, IRL 2021.

2025: Continuing.

ASIA

Afghanistan International Women's Film Festival (Kabul, Afghanistan)



Films about women and/or made by women, to highlight the power of women in different life situations, promote a positive image of women struggling with dignity to change their environment, discover new talent, films, and filmmakers with potential, and recognize the collaborative work the art form is founded on. Short or long feature and documentary films.

Used to be Herat International Women's Film Festival.

Covid status: uncertain.

2025: Latest edition 2020, website gone and last instagram post 2021; but is on Film Freeway.



Aichi International Women's Film Festival (Nagoya, Japan
https://www.aiwff.com/2020/index_en)

Films under 50 minutes directed by world-famous and emerging female directors. Guest talks and symposium that provide the participants with opportunities to exchange their views and ideas in order to promote the realization of a gender-equal society.

Covid status: uncertain.

2025: Latest edition 2020, but still has a website.



Asian Women's Film Festival (New Delhi, India, <https://www.iawrtindia.org/festival-2025/>)

Filmmaker has to be a woman/ transwoman of Asian origin, residing in any part of the world. All genres. Different themes each edition. Sections of the festival travel outside New Delhi. Run by International Association of Women in Radio and Television.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: Continuing.

Beirut International Women Film Festival (Beirut, Lebanon, <https://beirutwomenfilmfestival.com/>)

Films by and about women.

Educates future generations of filmmakers, sheds light on successful stories of women in cinema, empowers them, restores equilibrium in the way women are portrayed, removes the silhouette that is forced on them.



Covid status: 2021 IRL.

2025: Continuing.

China Women's Film Festival/ Bataru International Cultural Festival (Beijing/ Hong Kong, China, <https://chinawomensff.net/cwff-english>)



Promotes public awareness, understanding and advancement of women's rights and LGBTQ+ rights by highlighting the discrimination faced by these communities around the world, invigorating the

movement towards greater rights in China and abroad via the means of film and art.

Covid status: cancelled.

2025: Latest festival 2019 but has a website.

IAWRT Short Film Festival (Kathmandu, Nepal)



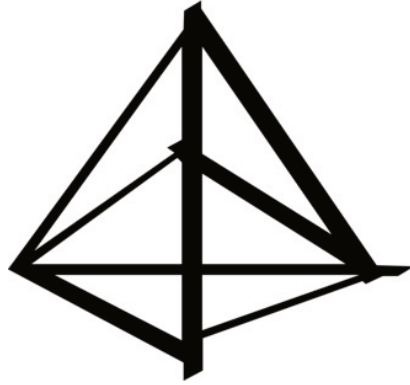
Aims to to increase the participation of women in the fields of film production, direction and writing. Organised by the Nepal chapter of the International Association of Women in Radio and Television.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: Continuing. No website, Facebook page only <https://www.facebook.com/IAWRTNEPAL>

One International Women's Film Festival (Chengdu, China, <http://www.oneiwff.com/>)

First and only women-themed film festival officially approved by Chinese government. Includes project market to inject new energy of women's film or female filmmakers into the film industry.



Hosts seminars every year to explore women's multi-dimensional opinions from perspective of academic, industrial and female issues.

Covid status: IRL 2021. Theme: Free Our Voice.

2025: Continuing.



Senior Women's Film Festival (Osaka, Japan, http://sister-waves.fem.jp/en/index_en.html: formerly **Women Make Sister Waves Film Festival**)

Senior women are attractive and with personality after the years of joys and sorrows and hardships. They still live their own lives, not retiring from the world.

Senior Women's Film Festival shows their richness and diversity through films, and thus helps to create senior women's culture. Films about senior women or films by senior women directors.

Covid status: IRL 2020.

Social media: not found.

2025: Continuing.



Seoul International Women's Film Festival (Seoul, Korea)

World's largest international women's film festival, with central role in building a women's film network across Asia and the world. Discovers Asian women filmmakers and supports women's film projects. Includes Pitch and Catch.

Covid status: IRL 2021.

2025: Continuing.

Shashat (Ramallah, Palestine, <http://www.shashat.org>)

An NGO that focuses on and prioritises women's representations in film and video.



Committed to the integration of the creative, developmental and educational implications of cinema and women's representations and maintains that culture and media can play a transforming role and serve as an interventionary agent in changing cultural attitudes about women. Vibrant ongoing programming: annual film festival was part of this.

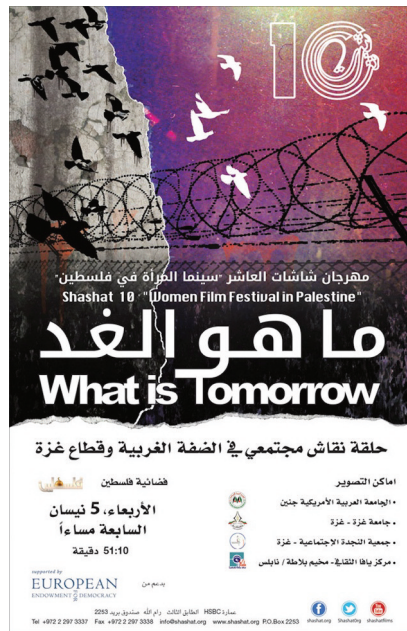
2025: Most recent, 11th, festival in 2023.

Continuing with instagram and Facebook 'Where Are They Now?' entries.

<https://www.facebook.com/shashat.org>; <https://www.instagram.com/shashat.womencinema/>

Read more at **Women Make Waves**: <https://www.wmw.org.tw/en/title/951>.

We can support Shashat through Women Make Movies: <https://www.wmm.com/sponsored-organizations/shashat-woman-cinema/>



. . .



Tokyo Women's Film Festival (Tokyo, Japan,
<https://www.twff.info/>)

Aims to realize women's empowerment and gender equality by fostering female artists, highlighting the problems facing self-identified women, and providing opportunities for widespread dissemination. Festival primary activity; also provides workshops, screenings, and study sessions on social issues to support further dissemination.



Covid status: virtual 2020.

2025: Uncertain.

Uçan Süpürge International Women's Film Festival/ Flying Broom International Women's Film Festival (Ankara, Turkey)
<https://flyingbroom.org/about-us/who-are-we/>



Aims to increase communication, co-operation and solidarity amongst women, transfer their experiences to the next generation, and establish a national and international communication network. Feature-length, short, documentary and animation films by women directors from Turkey and around the world, presented within a framework of specific themes, panels, discussions and exhibitions.

Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: continuing.

Women Make Waves (Taichung, Taiwan,
<https://www.wmw.org.tw/en/category/15>)



Provides a perspective on humanities and the arts through film, gender diversity, a strong network between social groups, and the establishment of feminist film resources. A window or stage for local filmmakers, and platform for their international exposure. Also publishes books, runs workshops and distributes films. In its 4th decade.

Covid status: IRL 2021.

2025: Continuing.



WOW Film Fair Middle East (Dubai UAE, <http://www.wowmiddleeast.com/about-us>)

Short film fair promoting and awarding women directors, producers, writers, editors and cinematographers internationally. Offers emerging and established filmmakers the opportunity to 'see the world through the eyes of women'. Aims to be a festival of discovery, celebration, debate, networking and an inspiration for new work.

Covid status: IRL 2022.

2025: Continuing.

CANADA & UNITED STATES

African-American Women In Cinema International Film Festival (AAWIC) (New York, US, <https://aawic.org/>)



Provides platform and showcase for aligning experienced and novice filmmakers, directors, producers, and screenwriters. Creates business opportunities for minority women filmmakers in entertainment. Chapters in Atlanta and Florida. Affiliate in Senegal.

COVID status: virtual edition 2021; and online series.

2025: Continuing. Includes virtual experience sponsored by Herflix.

Another Experiment By Women Film Festival (AXWFF,
<https://axwonline.com/>) (New York, US)

Promotes and screens moving images in any media, made by women, that encourage critical thinking and dialogue, feature alternative forms not covered in film school and/or represent themes and issues distinct to women and girls, with the hope to inspire others to make and hone their own experimental work to be shared with others.



Covid status: Streams short films.

2025: Last event January 2021.



Arizona Women's Film Festival (Flagstaff, Arizona, <http://azwomensfilmfest.com/>)

International: exploring the femxle experience from any avenue.

Covid status: virtual 2020; supported **Illuminate Film Festival** (<https://illuminatefilmfestival.com/>) 2021.

2025: Most recent festival 2023 but still working, to 'tell stories through an intersectional lens, centering women and our LGBTQ+ communities'. Illuminate FF continues.



Artemis Women in Action Film Festival (Beverly Hills, California, US, <https://www.artemisfilmfestival.com/>)

Narrative, animated, documentary films and scripts featuring women either starring or co-starring as a physical action character or agent of social change.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: 'festival hiatus until further notice'.

Athena Film Festival (Barnard College, New York, US, <https://athenafilmfestival.com/us/>)



Inspiring films that tell the extraordinary stories of fierce and fearless women leaders. Includes writing labs for TV and film writers, masterclasses and works-in-progress programs for women filmmakers, the Athena Virtual Writer's Lab and the **Athena List** (<https://athenafilmfestival.com/athena-list/>), an annual competition for screenplays with women leaders at the heart of their stories.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: continuing.

Bentonville Film Festival (Bentonville, Arkansas, US, <https://bentonvillefilm.org>)

Year-round platform for diverse voices in media, culminating in a week-long celebration in Bentonville. Founded by Geena Davis.



Covid status: hybrid.

2025: continuing.

Black Femme Supremacy Film Fest (Baltimore, Maryland, US, on the unceded land of the Piscataway, Lumbee, and Cherokee peoples. <http://bfsfilmfest.com/>)

Centers femme-identified black people of all ethnicities and nationalities.



Welcomes Indigenous filmmakers to submit to festival, to get into a greater conversation about the many nuances shared between the Black and Indigenous experience. Sponsored by Array.

Covid status: 2021 hybrid. Themes: environmental justice and the climate crises.

2025: Group still active on social media and with projects, is listed on Film Freeway, but festival appears to be in hiatus.

Black Laurel Films (San Francisco, California, US, formerly International Black Women's Film Festival)

Uses cinematic narrative to normalize presence of women of color as equitable partners in creative visual storytelling without sacrificing their intersectionality in the cinematic gaze. Screens the best in narrative feature, shorts, animation, and documentary films. Flanked by the Equity Film Market to expand the options for participants to network with industry insiders while finding new pathways for distribution and resources.



Covid status: "Black Laurel Films will be back. We're just resting our eyes"... still very active on social media.

2025: Last festival ?2018?; on Film Freeway but website gone. Still very active on social media.



Bloody Mary Film Festival (Toronto, Canada)

Yearly screening series. Spotlights the works of female-identifying Canadian filmmakers (including women of colour and women in the LGBTQ+ community) in genre films, specifically horror, sci-fi, and fantasy. Named after legendary mirror ghost from slumber parties past.

Covid status: postponed – virtual tweet-alongs 2020.

Nothing since 2020; website gone; social media in place but unused.

BOSTON
WOMEN'S
FILM FESTIVAL

Boston Women's Film Festival (Boston, Massachusetts, US
<https://www.bostonwomensfest.org/>)

Latest in media created by women from around the globe. Hosts panel discussions by leading figures in the media industry, bringing together creators and audiences for a weekend of celebrating the diversity and power of women's cinema.

Covid status: 2020 virtual; 2021 virtual or IRL (Keep an eye out!)

2025: 'Will return in 2023' on website but nothing on there or social media since 2022.

Breakthroughs Film Festival (Toronto, Canada,
<http://www.breakthroughsfilmfestival.com/>)



Short films by emerging women and non-binary directors from all over the world. Events throughout the year.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: continuing.

Broad Humor Film Festival (Venice, California, US,
<https://www.broadhumorfilmfest.com/>)

Women write. Women direct. Everybody laughs. Only festival to showcase only comedic films written and/or directed by women filmmakers. Animation, music video, short films, webseries, features. Screenplay competition: short, pilot or webseries, features and work by finalists in attendance at festival is included in a professional reading.



Covid status: Standing by – keep an eye on the website and social media for more info.

2025: continuing.

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Cascadia International Women's Film Festival (Bellingham, Washington, US, <https://www.cascadiafilmfest.org/>)

Annual international festival showcasing films directed by women.



Provides educational opportunities relating to the viewing, making, and distribution of films, promotes Bellingham, Whatcom County and the surrounding area as a destination for filmmakers and film enthusiasts. Short films selected through submission. Features curated. Live and pre-recorded Q&As, panel discussions and interviews with filmmakers now available on website.

Covid status: Virtual plus drive-in 2021. (2020 attendance as high as the 'live' festival, films viewed by U.S. and international audiences.)

2025: continuing.

Central Illinois Feminist Film Festival (Charleston, Illinois, US)

Promotes the mission of Women's Studies Program: to promote an understanding of how issues related to gender, age, race, economic status, sexual identity, and nationality affect women's lives and the communities in which they live, in order to promote an equitable and sensitive environment for all persons. Short films of high artistic quality.



(Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Central-Illinois-Feminist-Film-Festival-148062961905686/> primary information source, no website.)

Covid status: unknown.

2025: Nothing more.

Chicago Feminist Film Festival (Chicago, Illinois, US, <http://chicagofeministfilmfestival.com/>)

Showcases independent, international film addressing issues of gender and sexuality often missing from mainstream media. Creates inclusive public spaces for under-represented artists to share their work — particularly women, people of color, queer, and transgender folks, given their struggle for visibility in the mainstream film industry.



OCTOBER 8 - 13

A HOUSE IS NOT A HOME



FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT - ROSENBAUM HOUSE



The film will be available to screen October 8 - 13 with a live Q&A via Zoom with Director Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa on Tuesday, October 13 at 7pm. Registration is required to get an automated email with the password protected link to screen the film and a link to the Zoom Q&A.

Q&A

with Director Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa
Tuesday October 13 • 7:00 PM CST

Visit www.chicagofeministfilmfestival.com for registration details.



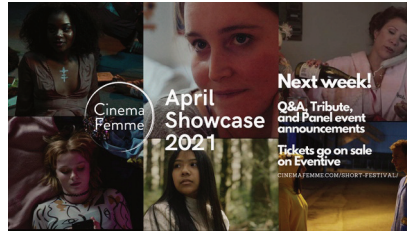
Includes social documentaries, horror, comedies, whimsical films, and romances.

Covid status: 'On hiatus as we map out how best to serve our audiences and filmmakers'.

2025: 'On hiatus as we map out how best to serve our audience'.
Active on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/ChiFemFilmFest>.

Cinema Femme Shorts Festival Showcase (Chicago, Illinois, US, <https://cinemafemme.com>)

Short films from emerging female-identifying and non-binary filmmakers: 'a nonprofit peer community advancing the careers of women and gender-expansive filmmakers. We offer inspiration, mentorship, and resources that fuel your art, and success'. Programme includes panel discussions.



Vocal about the need for women, women of color and LGBT+ representation onscreen and behind the lens, believe that together we can change the industry for the better. Offers mentorships to emerging female and non-binary filmmakers by connecting them to seasoned industry members through 6-month Womxn to Womxn in Film Mentorship Program.

Partners with Cineuropa and the Calvert Journal.

Covid status: hybrid 2022.

2025: continuing.

Cinema Systers Film Festival (Paducah, Kentucky, US,
<https://cinemasysters.com/>)



Uplifts the visions and voices of lesbian filmmakers, and provides a dedicated space to publicly showcase their art. An ‘acorn’ from the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival.

Covid status: postponed to 2022.

2025: continuing.



Colorado Independent Women of Film (Denver, US)

Celebrates a unique style, perspective, and artistic vision within Colorado’s indie filmmaking community. ‘Go ahead, call them chick flicks. We dare you.’

Covid status: uncertain.

2025: Most recent festival 2022. On Facebook only <https://www.facebook.com/CIWFDenver>.

Coven Film Festival (San Francisco, California, US)

Amplifies films by emerging women and non-binary filmmakers from the San Francisco Bay Area and around the world.

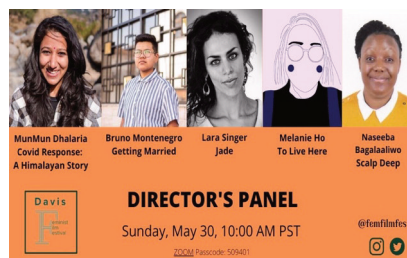


Covid status 2021: Quarterly online screenings, panels and Q&As with filmmakers.

2025: Cancelled 2023 festival. Website gone.

Davis Feminist Film Festival (Davis, California, US, <https://linktr.ee/davisfemfilmfest>)

Provides inclusive public space for under-represented artists — particularly women and people of color — to raise consciousness about gender, race, class, sexuality, and other dimensions of social inequality. Increasingly international in scope.



Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: continuing.

Detroit SheTown Film Festival (Detroit, Michigan, US
<https://www.detroitshetownfilmfestival.com/>)

Screens short films in a variety of genre to highlight female-driven independent cinema and video in performances, stories and key filmmaking production positions.



Covid status: virtual.

2025: website and social media unused since 2021.

Drunk Feminist Films (Toronto, Ontario, Canada
<http://drunkfeministfilms.com/>)

Feminists who would rather laugh than cry their way through Hollywood representations of gender, race, class, sexuality and other aspects of identity. DFF hosts bi-monthly live screenings in Ontario and produce[d] a webseries <http://youtube.com/drunkfeministfilms>.



Covid status: virtual events, including watch parties.

2025: still active.



Etheria Film Night (Hollywood, California, US,
<https://www.etheriafilmnight.com/>)

Etheria Film Night screens the best new short science fiction, fantasy, action, thriller, comedy, and horror films directed by women. Ongoing travelling showcase that takes selected films around the world for festivals, university screenings, conventions, and private events

Covid status: hybrid.

2025: 'Etheria Competition Lineup will air on SHUDDER TV (<https://www.shudder.com/>) for 30 days in JULY 2025. SHUDDER has over 1 Million+ subscribers and is the largest horror streaming service in the world. There will also be a live, in-person theatrical event.'

. . .

Everett Film Festival, formerly Everett Women's Film Festival, (Everett, Washington, US, <https://everettfilmfestival.org/>)



Dedicated to highlighting the strength, humor and creativity of women through provocative and entertaining films. Main focus on female written, directed, or produced films, but willing to consider all films. Especially interested in locally made films or films with a Northwest flavor.

Covid status: postponed.

2025: continuing.



Family of Woman Film Festival (Sun Valley, Idaho, US)

Founded to bring attention to the issues confronting women and girls around the world through compelling cinematic stories. Presents five feature films each year, most of which center on the year's selected theme.

Covid status 2021: on hiatus.

2025: website gone and social media not used.

Female Eye Film Festival (Toronto, Canada <https://www.thefemaleeyefilmfestival.com>)



Competitive women directors' festival for debut, emerging and internationally recognized directors. Drama, comedy, sci-fi, action, documentary, experimental and animation.

Films, script development, a photo exhibit, pitch sessions, master classes, tributes, and industry-initiative programs. FeFF mentors youth on their debut films, which are premiered at the festival

Has guest-curated programs in Armenia, Turkey, Greece, Portugal, and the United States. In 2020, partnering with sister festivals in Chile, Lebanon, Sweden, and Russia.

Covid status 2021: virtual.

2025: continuing.

Female Filmmakers Fuse (Los Angeles, California, US)



The movement for diversity, equality and inclusion and a safe work-place for all! The only rule there is...the film must feature a female lead in the production aspect; producer, director, cinematographer and or writer.

Covid status 2021: IRL.

2025: last festival 2022. Website gone and social media unused since then.

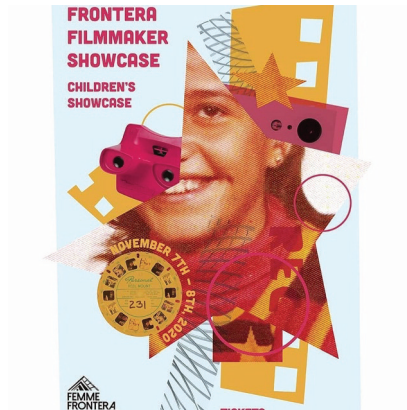
Female Voices Rock (New York City, US <https://www.femalevoicesrock.com/>)

Founded to help promote, nurture and produce stories through the female perspective.



Covid status: virtual.

2025: continuing.



Femme Frontera (El Paso, Texas, US <https://www.femme-frontera.org/#intro>)

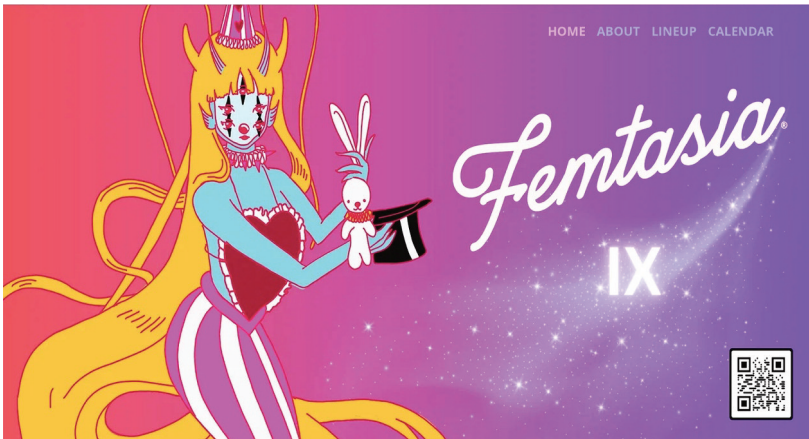
Founded and led by women and gender-expansive filmmakers from the U.S.-Mexico border region of El Paso, Texas, Las Cruces, New Mexico, and Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua, México. Femme Frontera

centers the experiences of women and gender-expansive people within the U.S./Mexico border diaspora, as well as border regions around the world, and generates resources and support for filmmakers whose lived border experiences inform their connection to those stories. We provide essential support and expanded access for filmmakers who are navigating and examining pervasive and perceived barriers globally, especially at the US-Mexico border. Femme Frontera's ecosystem offers filmmakers and communities opportunities for shared storytelling and discourse, exhibitions and showcases, project funding, peer-to-peer resources, mentorship, and film education, toward a world beyond and in defiance of borders and barriers.

Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: continuing.

Femtasia: (formerly Les Femmes Underground International Film Festival) (Los Angeles CA, US
<https://www.femtasiafest.org/>)



Underground film cyberfeminist pop Grrrl Gang. Centers on the subversive, unique, and innovative, showcases artists from all walks of life creating work which redefines how womxn are represented in mainstream cinema.

Covid status: IRL 2022.

2025: continuing.

Festival de Films Féministes de Montréal / Montreal Feminist Film Festival (Montreal, Canada)



Special focus on films directed by women of colour, indigenous and LGBTQ+ filmmakers.

Des oeuvres de partout au monde avec une attention particulière accordée aux films réalisés par des femmes, par des personnes racisées, autochtones, LGBTQ+ et en situation de marginalité et de minorité.

Covid status 2021: hybrid.

2025: defunct but still with Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/FFFMontreal/>.



Film Girl Film Festival (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, US
<https://www.filmgirlfilm.com/>)

A society of women who shape the world with their imagination:
 international.

Covid status: next edition March 2022.

2025: final festival ?2024? Social media gone.

Fusion Film Festival (Tisch at New York University, New York,
 US <https://wp.nyu.edu/tischschoolofthearts-fusionfilmfestival/>)

Annual celebration of the work of the next generation of women in
 film, tv & new media. Multiple screenings, industry panels, pitch
 meetings, master-classes, retrospectives, and student showcases.
 Committed to uplifting the voices of women and non-binary
 creators.



Covid status: series of online events.

2025: continuing.

. . .

High Falls Film Festival (Rochester, New York, US)

Celebrates artistry and innovation of women in film. Inspired by Rochester's legacy as the birthplace of film and the women's rights movement.



International slate of independent films enhanced by panels, workshops, and talks with filmmakers.

Covid status: transitioning to a monthly series.

2025: the only series so far was in 2022.



Imagine This Film Festival (Brooklyn, New York, US
<https://www.imaginethisprods.com/>)

Aims to amplify and empower independent and aspiring womxn filmmakers from around the world, by sharing their work with the public, promoting equal opportunities for BIPOC womxn and the LGBTQIA+ community while providing educational and professional development, and serving as a resource information network.

Covid status: virtual.

2025: continuing.

La Femme International Film Festival (Beverly Hills, CA, US
<https://lafemme.org>)

Supports and nurtures the artistic entertainment productions of women for distribution to an international and domestic audience. Based on showcasing and celebrating commercially successful films written, directed, or produced by women and creating a system of access for those new to the industry directly to established women industry professionals.



Covid status: hybrid.

2025: continuing.

Lady Filmmakers (Beverly Hills CA, US <https://www.ladyfilmmakers.com>)

Celebrates lady filmmakers, musicians, artists and the men who collaborate with them. Screenings, workshops, panels, parties, and awards! Includes screenplay contest.



Covid status: hybrid 2021 (online screenings available worldwide).

2025: continuing.



London Lesbian Film Festival (London, Ontario, Canada
<http://www.llff.ca/>)

Canada's only lesbian film festival. Aims to portray the richness and diversity of lesbian experiences and to strengthen lesbian communities.

Covid status: festival cancelled, drive-in event(s).

2025: continuing.

Los Angeles Women in Film Festival (Los Angeles, California, US
<https://www.lafilmfestivals.com/la-women-in-film-fest>)

Champions female identifying filmmakers and female driven storytelling. Affiliate festival of the LA Film Festivals organization. Aims to discover great talent with the purpose of promoting their work to LA public and entertainment industry; and to showcase work of seasoned professionals and well-known stars.



Covid status 2022: ?IRL.

2025: continuing.



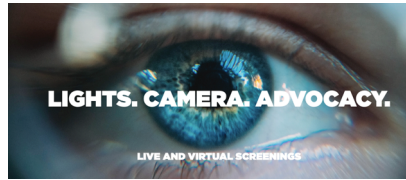
Los Angeles Women's International Film Festival (Los Angeles, California, US <https://www.lawomensfest.com/>)

Platform for women filmmakers worldwide to share their unique stories and cultural experiences with Los Angeles' diverse audience.

Programming reflects Alliance of Women Filmmakers' mission to educate and inform audiences of social, political, and health issues impacting women globally.

Covid status: hybrid 2022.

2025: most recent festival 2022.



Lunafest (travelling in US and Canada.)

Short films by, for & about women. Aims to support and nurture the inspiring and often unsung work of talented women filmmakers and to raise funds and awareness for causes that help, empower and give a voice to women from all walks of life.

Programme available as fundraiser in United States/Canada only. Associated with Luna food & beverages.

Covid status: hybrid.

2025: defunct.

Mama.film (Wichita, Kansas/Cleveland, Ohio, US
<https://mama.film/>)

A village at the crossroads of art and advocacy where storytellers, changemakers and nurturers come together to champion humanity through a maternal gaze. Exhibits content by & for women of all kinds; elevates courageous storytellers; educates through conversation and connection; empowers nurturers around the globe.



Official partner Sundance Film Festival 2021.

Covid status: 2021 activities include the **rePRO Film Fest**
(<https://www.reprofilmfest.com/separate> entry below).

2025: continuing with screening events.

Nevada Women's Film Festival (Las Vegas, Nevada, US
<https://www.nwffest.com/>)

Celebrates and supports the fair representation of women in film, showcases films with a strong female presence, women at the helm, stories that depict women in a positive light with diversity of world-view, background and experience.



Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: continuing.

New Negress Film Society (Brooklyn, New York, US <https://newnegressfilmsociety.com/>)

Collective of Black woman and non-binary filmmakers. Prioritises creation of community and spaces for exhibition, support, and consciousness-raising. Focuses primarily on works that break boundaries in film politically and artistically, are womanist in their content and experimental in form, often some of most challenging for a marginalized filmmaker to create and distribute.

Annual conference convenes Black women and non-binary filmmakers from all over the world to share work, discuss the craft, exchange filmmaking strategies, and build community. Showcases films and hosts conversations between filmmakers, scholars and curators and explores current landscape of cinema and intersections of history, filmmaking, and political action.



Covid status: 2020 virtual. Ongoing events.

2025: continuing intermittent events.

New York International Women Festival (New York, US
<https://niff.net>)

Competitive Festival dedicated to films by women or about women, and films about fashion and beauty.



Covid status: unknown.

2025: in hiatus? Website, but no social media.

Post Alley Film Festival (Seattle, Washington, US
<http://www.postalleyfilmfestival.com/>)

**POST
ALLEY
FILM
FESTIVAL**

Female centric (and eccentric) short films from around the block & around the globe: drama, documentary, experimental, archival, narrative, and animation. Some directed by men.

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Covid status: postponed.

2025: continuing, info via Facebook.



POW Film Fest — Portland Oregon Women's Film Festival (Portland, Oregon, US <https://powfilmfest.com/>)

Provides space and support to strengthen the community of women in film. Puts strong, women-directed films on screen, features top filmmakers, grows next generation of women filmmakers, and makes it easier for women to make films. POWGirls program: year-round film workshops for girls and non-binary youth ages 15 -19.

Covid status: virtual edition — short films only.

2025: noting since 2022.

Queer Women of Color Festival (San Francisco, California, US, <https://qwocmap.org/festival/> boutique distributor <https://qwocmap.org/watchfilms/>)



Screens films created through its programs, and films by independent filmmakers that authentically reflect lives of queer women of color (cisgender and transgender), gender nonconforming and transgender people of color (of any orientation). Addresses intersecting social justice issues that concern multiple communities, nurtures filmmakers as artist-activist leaders, to create systemic change and lead social justice movements that incorporate the power of art as cultural resistance, cultural reclamation, cultural resilience and cultural renewal.

Covid status: virtual. Always ASL interpreters.

2025: continuing.

Reel Sisters of the Diaspora Film Festival & Lecture Series

(Brooklyn, New York, US <http://www.reelsisters.org/>)

Short films by women of African, Caribbean, Latino, Asian, Indian and Native American descent, alongside a year-round professional development programme.

Dedicated to empowering women of color in the film business. First Academy-Qualifying Film Festival for narrative shorts devoted to women of color.



Covid status: hybrid.

2025: continuing, with 25th anniversary celebrations.

rePRO Film Fest (Wichita, Kansas/Cleveland, Ohio, US
<https://www.reprofilmfest.com/>)

Dedicated to women's reproductive healthcare. Uses power of storytelling as a catalyst for knowledge, intention, and action. Spotlights societal issues, advocates for women's reproductive health care, justice, and bodily autonomy. Cis, trans, and non-binary inclusive.

A program of **mama.film** film series (see entry above).



Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: Active but no festival.



Rocky Mountain Women's Film Festival (Colorado Springs, Colorado, US <https://rmwfilm.org/>)

Elevates the stories of women and others who are often unheard or unseen, cultivating a more empathetic and connected community. Showcases documentary, narrative shorts and animated films.

Covid status: drive-in series 2021.

2025: continuing.



Sick Chick Flicks Film Festival (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, US <https://www.sickchickflicksfilmfestival.com>)

Celebrates independent Horror, SciFi, and Fantasy films with emphasis on female driven independent films.

Covid status: cancelled 2021; IRL plan 2022.

2025: continuing.

St John's International Film Festival (Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada <https://www.womensfilmfestival.com/>)

Made by women, for everyone. Part of a vigorous programme that includes **Filmed on the Go** screening tour of short films from last year's festival and the **FRAMED Film Education Series** offering hands-on, high-quality professional filmmaking camps to encourage, support and train people in the craft and business of filmmaking.

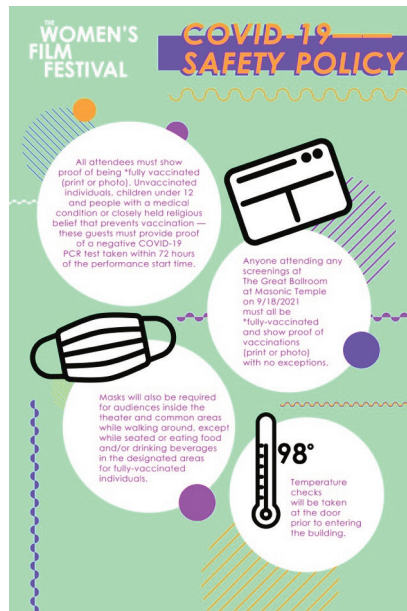


Covid status: virtual, geoblocked outside Canada some outside Atlantic Canada.

2025: continuing.

The Women's Film Festival (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, US
<https://thewomensfilmfestival.org>)

Aims to inspire and cultivate a movement of supporters who celebrate and collaborate the power of women in the film and entertainment industry. Celebrates female expression that encourages women to embrace leading roles in the film and entertainment industry. Forum where all can showcase and discuss the artistic presence of women on screen and off.



Documentary, short, feature, animation, music videos.

Covid status: IRL 2021.

2025: continuing.



Through Women's Eyes Film Festival (Sarasota, Florida, US
<http://www.throughwomenseyes.com/>)

Advancing gender equity through film. Focuses on increasing local awareness about the situation of women in developing countries and raising funds for UNIFEM programs. Showcases women filmmakers & directors. The films address global issues and highlight the challenges women face.

Covid status 2021: virtual.

2025: continuing.

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CELEBRATE
CONNECT**

www.womeninfilmm.ca



Vancouver Women in Film Festival (Vancouver, Canada)

Short, and feature films — narrative, documentary, experimental and animation — by established and emerging women filmmakers from around the world.

Includes an international screenplay competition. Run by WIFT Vancouver.

Covid status 2022: may be held online.

2025: defunct.

Women + Film (Denver, Colorado, US <https://www.denverfilm.org/women-plus-film-festival/>)

Celebrates outstanding cinema about and by women, and connects Colorado audiences to the filmmakers whose groundbreaking work examines the roles, challenges, and triumphs of women everywhere. Run by Denver Film.



Covid status: 2022 IRL; also virtual platform screenings (available only in Colorado) & conversations.

2025: continuing.



Women of African Descent Film Festival (Brooklyn, New York, US)

Showcases films centered around the theme of linkages: women, their families, neighborhoods, and the global community. Supports artistic development of women filmmakers of African descent by providing a supportive exhibition platform, offers stipends to participants, and seeks industry opportunities to help to expose the filmmakers' works and further their careers.

Covid status: planned for 2022.

2025: Most recent festival 2023. Some events on social media.

Women's Film Festival San Diego (San Diego, California, US
<https://sdfilmfest.com/spotlight-on-women-filmmakers/>)

Held at the Women's Museum of California in partnership with the San Diego International Film Festival.

Strives to educate and inspire future generations about the experiences and contributions of women through the art of film.

Dedicated to supporting women filmmakers and giving them an opportunity to showcase their work.

WOMEN'S FILM SERIES
PRESENTED BY THE WOMEN'S MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

The San Diego International Film Festival presents the 'Women's Film Series' in partnership with the Women's Museum of California.

Don't miss out on the chance to watch these special films featuring female filmmakers plus
In the FEST LOUNGE we'll be hosting the Festival's Women In Film: Breaking Barriers and Shaping the Industry.

<p>BOB TREVINO LIKES IT Drama / Social Issue / LGBTQIA+ Saturday, October 19, 3:45 PM Sunday, October 20, 3:45 PM</p>	<p>MARKS OF MAJESTY Included in Short Tracks 'DocuDrama' Saturday, October 19, 3:45 PM Sunday, October 20, 5:30 PM</p>	<p>WE WERE DANGEROUS Drama / Social Issue / LGBTQIA+ Friday, October 18, 7:30 PM Sunday, October 20, 6:30 PM</p>	<p>BRING THEM HOME Documentary / American Indian Saturday, October 19, 10:45 AM Sunday, October 20, 1:00 PM</p>	<p>THE MARIANA TRENCH Drama / Social Issue / LGBTQIA+ Thursday, October 17, 1:45 PM Friday, October 18, 12:45 PM</p>
<p>THE LAST RANGER Included in Short Tracks 'Heart Strings' Friday, October 18, 5:45 PM Sunday, October 20, 6:45 PM</p>	<p>BUSCANDO ALMA Included in Short Tracks 'Heart Strings' Friday, October 18, 5:45 PM Sunday, October 20, 6:45 PM</p>	<p>AND THE OCEAN AGREED Included in Short Tracks 'Heart Strings' Friday, October 18, 5:45 PM Sunday, October 20, 6:45 PM</p>	<p>PANEL WOMEN IN FILM: Breaking Barriers and Shaping the Industry SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19 1:30 Moderated by Sandra Maas</p> <p>Explore the impact of women in film with a dynamic group of industry trailblazers. This panel will discuss overcoming challenges in a male-dominated field. The evolving role of women in filmmaking and how women are shaping the future of film. Join us for an insightful discussion celebrating women's contributions and future prospects in the industry.</p> <p>Sandra Maas Moderator</p>	

"The San Diego International Film Festival and the Women's Museum of California have a shared passion for cultivating female written/directed and produced films. By partnering together we are able to combine the work we are both doing in this area and share female-led films with a broader audience."
— Tonya Mantooth, CEO and Artistic Director of the Festival

From 2024 festival, because they included a film from Aotearoa: Josephine Stewart-Te Whiu's *We Were Dangerous*

Covid status 2021: film series with live Q & As; festival TBA.

2025: uncertain.

Women's Film Festival (Brattleboro, Vermont, US
<http://womensfilmfestival.org/general-info/>)

Celebrates movies from around the world. Platform for women to tell their own stories. Documentaries, feature films and shorts. Major fundraiser for the Women's Freedom Center, a non-profit domestic and sexual violence organization.



Covid status 2020-2021: canceled. 'Stay tuned for 2022.'

2025: no update.



Women's Independent Film Festival (Tarzana, California, US)

Gives voice to womxn filmmakers from every part of the world.

Covid status: postponed.

2025: defunct.



Women's International Film and Arts Festival (New York; Miami, Florida US <https://womensfilmfest.com/>)

Annual women's international film and arts festival in New York. Smaller events in South Florida. Empowers women's artistic vision internationally, encourages marketing and distribution of films throughout the world. About to launch **WIFFTV** <https://wifftv.com/>: all-new subscription service - television; films; podcasts by and about women.

Covid status: returns March 2022.

2025: uncertain. Conference planned but no festival. WIFFTV 'coming back soon'.

Worldwide Women's Film Festival (Phoenix, Arizona, US <https://wwfilmfestival.org/>)

Supports women in film by educating, supporting and empowering them in the collaborative endeavor of filmmaking while shining a light on women's stories and other diverse experiences across all genders.



Covid status: IRL.

2025: continuing.

WRPN Women's International Film Festival (Nassau, Delaware US <http://www.wwiff.com>)



Distribution and feedback opportunities abound for films made by women, or films that carry subject matter relating to concerns particular to women's issues.

Covid status: hybrid.

2025: continuing.

LATIN AMERICA



Warm thanks to journalist Luísa Pécora of the beautiful **Mulher no Cinema**,^a — ‘um site para celebrar as mulheres nas telas, a site to celebrate women on screen’ — for her assistance with this region.



^a <https://mulhernocinema.com/>

Cabíria Festival (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil www.cabiria.com.br)

A film festival and screenplay contest for stories with strong female lead roles, advocating for more diversity on screen and behind the cameras. Started as an award for screenplays with female protagonists. Labs, masterclasses and debates.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: 10th edition.

Cine de la Mujer Marialionza (Yaracuy, Venezuela)

Women and patriarchal symbols. We expose the decadence of the old institutions. Last festival 2015 but still active online.



2025: defunct.

CineFem - Festival Internacional de Cine de la Mujer (Punta del Este, Uruguay <https://www.festivalesdepuntadeleste.com/10mo-cine-de-la-mujer-2022>)

CineFem, Uruguay's first international women's film festival, is a space to reflect on the role of women in cinema and in our society. CineFem, the woman's view.



Covid status: IRL 2020.

2025: uncertain status — most recent edition 2022.



DIGO International Film Festival on Gender and Sexual Diversity of Goiás (Goiânia, Brazil <http://digofestival.com.br/>)

Showcases and raises awareness diversity, gender and sexuality, to promote inclusion, social change and respect for others, through contemporary audiovisual work and urging historical reviews. As an international event, emphasises cross-cultural communication.

Covid status: virtual.

2025: continuing.



Dulcísimo Ovario Festival de Vídeo y Cine Femenino
(Pachuca, Hidalgo, Mexico <https://www.facebook.com/DulcísimoOvario/>)

Promotes audiovisual productions directed by Mexican women, and seeks to question, encourage and recall the role of women within our society. Festival includes conferences, screenings and presentations of various audiovisual works from a female perspective.

Covid status: virtual.

2025: continuing. Info on Facebook.



Encontro Nacional Empoderadas — Mulheres Negras no Audiovisual (São Paulo, Brazil
<https://www.instagram.com/instaempoderadas/>)

Screens films with Black women in key creative positions. Started as a web series about Black women in Brazil and evolved into a festival. Published **Empowered Untold Narratives of Brazilian Audiovisual** 2021, essays, articles, interviews and reports from Black and Indigenous women (cis and trans) professionals, to build a historic picture of Brazilian filmmakers.

Announced **III National Meeting Empowered Black and Indigenous Women in the Brazilian Audiovisual**, for 2022.

Covid status: virtual 2020, then adapted to a lab format.

2025: ongoing. 3d edition 2024. A 2025 lab for documentary announced.



FemCine (Santiago, Chile <https://femcine.cl/>)

International feature and short film competitions. Includes national Chilean Film School Short Film Competition.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: continuing.

Festival De Cortometrajes De Mujeres Colombianas
(Salento, Quindio, Colombia <https://mujeresfilmfestival.com/>)

Aims to create a space to promote Colombian women short film-makers who hold positions of responsibility and leadership in the film sector. Short films directed and/or produced by women on themes of 'fantasy' and 'dream'.



Covid status: IRL 2021.

2025: continuing.

FIM — Festival Internacional Mulheres no Cinema (São Paulo, Brazil <https://fimcine.com.br/br/home/>)

Films directed by women. Runs training activities online and women's film market.



Covid status: virtual 2020.

2025: most recent festival 2024, info from Facebook.



FINCAR — International Women Filmmakers Festival
(Recife, Pernambuco Brazil <https://www.instagram.com/fincar-festival/>)

Biennial festival. Films directed by women (trans and cis), non-binary people, transvestites, transmasculine people and trans men!

For us, 'Cinema de Realizadoras' (Realizadoras in Portuguese literally refers to 'Women Filmmakers') means above all a call to action.

It does not refer to a particular film categorization and it is not an attempt to reinforce gender norms.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

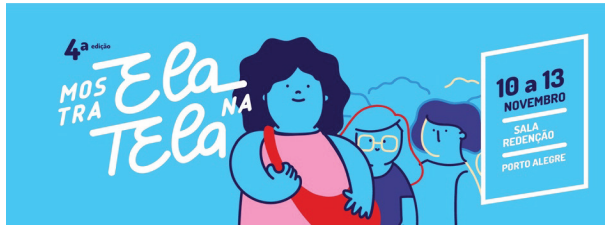
2025: 4th edition 2024. Website gone.

Mostra Ela na Tela (Porto Alegre, Brazil)

Screens films directed by women.

Covid status: still active on Facebook.

2025: no activity on Facebook page.



Mostra Lugar de Mulher É no Cinema (Salvador, Brazil)

<https://mostramulhernocinema.com.br/>

Short films directed by women and non-binary people.

Has also participated in Brasilianisches Kulturfestival Wien.



Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: continuing — <https://www.facebook.com/mostramulhernocinema>.

Muestra Internacional de Cine con Perspectiva de Género — **MICGénero** (Mexico <https://micgenero.com/>)



Esta muestra es una invitación a cuestionar la forma de ver películas desde una perspectiva de género.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: continuing.

Tudo Sobre Mulheres — Festival de Cinema Feminino (Cuiabá, Brazil)

Screens films directed by women and about ‘the female universe’: male directors are included.

Covid status: virtual 2020, some shorts from past editions.



2025: defunct.

EUROPE

Bechdel Test Fest (in and around London UK)

All-year celebration of films that represent women in a positive and progressive light.



Covers the spectrum of those who identify as female and as many genres as possible. Post-screening discussions, usually with special guests. Includes podcast: **Who Is She?**



Inspired by cartoonist Alison Bechdel's comic strip 'The Rule' which became a basic measure to see if women are fairly represented in a film – 1: It must have at least two female characters 2: Who both have names 3: Who talk to each other about something other than a man.

Covid status: virtual.

2025: defunct.

Berlin Feminist Film Week (Berlin, Germany
<http://berlinfeministfilmweek.com/>)

Celebrating artists who challenge the hegemony of white cis-male world of filmmaking.



Covid status: Back in 2022.

2025: Did not return in 2022, still some social media presence. ? defunct.

Cine Por Mujeres (Madrid, Spain <https://www.festivalcinepor-mujeres.com/en/>)

Presents the work and the standpoint of women at the five steps in the process of creating a film: creation and training; production and screening; promotion and marketing; distribution and sales; and consumption of cultural goods and accessibility. Training is a cornerstone of the festival.



Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: continuing.

Cineffable (Paris, France,
<https://www.cineffable.fr/en/editoEn.htm>)

Films by women film-makers, films for lesbians and films by lesbians. An annual rendez-vous, an empowering moment with images of lesbians and feminist perspectives, with debates, an art exhibition, an opening gala concert and a party.



Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: continuing (37th year!)

Cinesister (Peterborough, UK <http://cinesisterfilm.com/>)

Showcases and promotes films made with female-identifying film-makers in a leadership role through film screenings, workshops and events.



Covid status: virtual film club.

2025: continuing.

Club Des Femmes (UK <https://www.clubdesfemmes.com/>)



Queer feminist curatorial collective. Offers a freed up space for the re-examination of ideas through art.

Covid status: online events; IRL screenings 2021.

2025: Continuing, easiest access at instagram.

Corto Helvetic Al Femminile: Women's International Short Film Festival (Ticino, Switzerland)

Every second year.



Covid status: uncertain.

2025: defunct.

Demakijaz — Women's Film Festival/Demakijaz — Festiwal Kina Kobiet (Lublin, Poland <https://camerafemina.org/> 'site will be available soon)

Organised by Homo Faber Association, the Centre for Culture in Lublin, and Camera Femina, a Polish foundation that advocates for the increasing participation of women in culture and public life through dissemination of the work of female filmmakers, cultural events and year-round workshops. Includes 'Caribbean voices' section from **Hairouna Film Festival** (<https://hairounaff.org/>)



Covid status: virtual.

2025: uncertain.

Directed By Women Spain (Madrid)

Part of the annual, global, **Directed By Women** event.

Covid status: IRL 2021.



2025: uncertain.

Directed By Women Turkey (Istanbul <https://www.directedbywomen.turkey.com/>)

Part of the annual, global, **Directed By Women** event.

Covid status: IRL 2021.

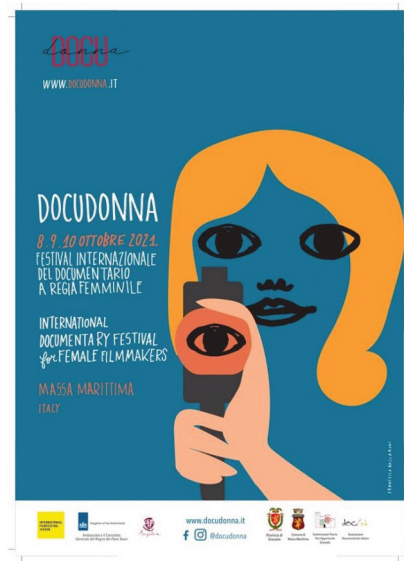


2025: uncertain.

DocuDonna (Massa Marittima, Tuscany, Italy <https://www.docudonna.it/it/>)

Documentaries directed by women.

Aimed at directors who intend to present their works as their own personal vision of the world. Allows many film, art and culture enthusiasts to discover the unpredictable styles of the new 'Reality Cinema'.



Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: continuing.

Dublin Feminist Film Festival (Dublin, Ireland
<https://www.dublinfeministfilmfestival.com>)

Promotes and celebrates female filmmakers, hoping to inspire and empower others to get involved in filmmaking.



Covid status: hybrid 2021. Theme: Care and Connection, in partnership with Irish Film Institute.

2025: defunct since 2022 but good website remains.

Ellas Son Cine (Madrid, Spain)

Celebrates African women filmmakers with films that present a plural, innovative and feminist vision of the African cinematic landscape. Run by Fundación Mujeres por África.



Covid status: IRL 2021 (<https://mujeresporafrica.es/en/proyectos/women-make-movies/>).

2025: Fundación Mujeres por África continues its commitment to cinema, but programme uncertain.

Elles Tournent/ Dames Draien (Brussels, Belgium
<https://www.ellestournent-damesdraaien.org/biwff-2025/>)

Promotes and enhances the work of women in the arts and cultural world in general and particularly in the audiovisual and media sectors, through its festival, research, On The Road initiatives and webinars. Useful videos on its facebook.



Covid status: online 2021; and various collaborations.

2025: continuing, with Brussels International Women's Film Festival.



Female Filmmakers Film Festival Berlin (Berlin, Germany
<https://femalefilmmakersberlin.com/>)

Created to support up and coming female talents from different ethnic backgrounds and nationalities, who have a unique story to tell. International short films & feature films of all genres and hand-picked music videos. Panels, networking sessions and discussions about recent topics.

Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: continuing.

. . .

Femspectives — Glasgow Feminist Film Festival (Glasgow, Scotland <https://femspectives.com/>)

Series and festival in Glasgow.

Provides a platform for feminist storytelling and safe spaces for conversations about feminisms, social issues, and politics.

Covid status: virtual weekender 2021, tickets priced on Pay What You Can basis. All films captioned, all discussions and social events free, via Zoom. Plus weekly virtual film club, includes communal viewing and tweet along, zoom chats.



2025: closed March 2022. Website now an archive.

Festival Cinema d'iDEA International Women's Film Festival (Rome, Italy <https://cinemadidea.com/>)

Women and transgender filmmakers. A starting and meeting point for the diversification of film culture, the image of women and feminine empowerment, not only in the cinema.



Covid status: virtual.

2025: continuing.

Festival di Cinema e Donne Firenze (Florence, Italy
<https://www.cinemalacompagnia.it/festival-di-cinema-e-donne/>)

Celebrates celebrates the important role many women play in the world of film. Features, shorts, documentaries.



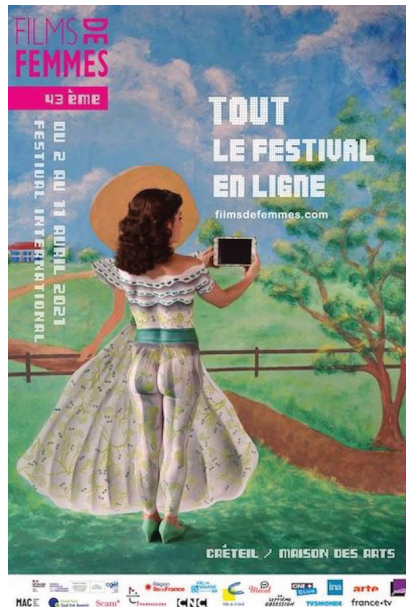
Covid status: hybrid 2021 (see Afterword re its last-minute cancellation.)

2025: continuing.

Festival International de Films de Femmes (Créteil, Paris, France <https://filmsdefemmes.com>)

Cinema from all over the world, made by women. By taking the initiative to promote a cinema made by women, the festival chooses to fight against censorship, self-censorship, and to open a door for film professionals on the distribution and financing circuits. By being open to the whole world, it probes both the evolution of creation and that of the place of women in the cinema professions.

Covid status: virtual screenings 2021.



2025: continuing.

. . .

Festival **Toi** **Femmes** (Paris, France
<https://www.creaxion.net/evenement>)

The world of women in all their diversity, in all their experiences, in their dreams and their realities. One day devoted to films of young people, aged from 7 to 17. Young filmmakers are very welcome to send their movies.

Covid status: uncertain.



2025: continuing.

Films Femmes Méditerranée (Marseilles, Hyères etc, France
<http://films-femmes-med.org/>)

Discovers, supports and exhibits cinema by Mediterranean women directors./Découvrir, soutenir et diffuser le cinéma des réalisatrices

de la Méditerranée.

Covid status: virtual and free.



2025: continuing.

Film Mor Women's Film Festival on Wheels (starts Istanbul, Turkey, and travels throughout Turkey <http://filmmor.org/19-filmmor/>)



To make cinema, to contest, to produce, to dream, to act, for women, with women. Travelling programme, workshops, courses, films.

Covid status: virtual.

2025: continuing.

Freiburger Lesbenfilmtage/ Lesbian Film Festival of Freiburg (Germany <http://www.freiburger-lesbenfilmtage.de/>)



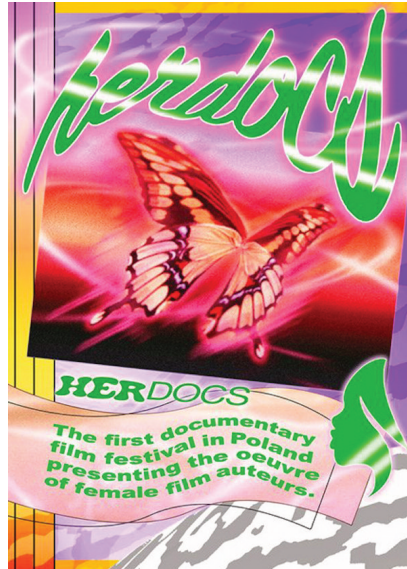
Covid status: hybrid 2021. Open-air and communal cinema screenings with extensive checks, masks and daily corona tests; and online streams.

2025: continuing.

. . .

HER Docs Film Festival (Warsaw, Poland <https://herdocs.pl/en/festival/attend/>)

Celebrates documentary. Space for exchange of ideas and lively debate, inspiring screenings, meetings, workshops and music events, for those who are curious about the world.



Short-, medium- and feature-length documentaries, documentary animations and video artworks directed or co-directed by womxn.

Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: continuing.

International Female Film Festival Malmö (Malmö, Sweden <http://www.femalefilmfestival.se/>)



Annual festival screening feature films, shorts and docs by female directors.

Covid status: IRL 2021.

2025: continuing.

International Film Festival Assen| Vrouw & Film (Assen, Netherlands <https://filmfestivalassen.nl/>)

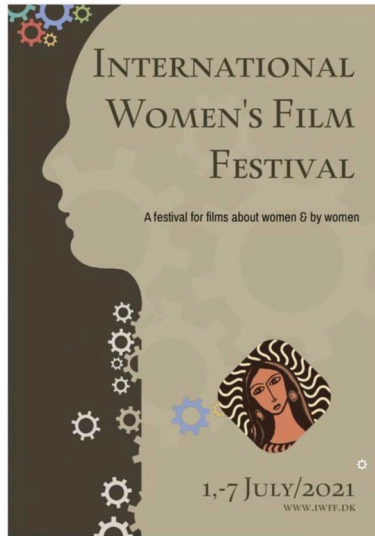
Focuses on role of women in front of and behind the camera, strengthens the position of women in film by providing a platform and encouraging and stimulating female filmmakers.



Program of recently released (inter)national titles, exclusive pre-releases and a careful selection of last year's best films that match the IFA mission.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: continuing.



International Women's Film Festival/Arab Women Film Festival (Aarhus, Denmark)

Seeks to educate and inspire future generations about the experiences and contributions of women through the art of film. Films must be directed by and about women.

Covid status: IRL Arab Women Film Festival 2020; International Women's Film Festival 2021.

2025: uncertain, website gone but Facebook still there.



Internationales Frauenfilmfest/ International Women's Film Festival (Dortmund/ Köln, Germany <https://frauenfilmfest.com/>)

Presents latest film developments and trends for women working in all areas of film production. All genres and styles. Discussions, workshops and networks, to share experience and training opportunities.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: continuing.

KIN International Film Festival (Yerevan, Armenia <http://kinfestival.com/>)

«Կին» միջազգային կինոփառատոն



"KIN" International Film Festival

Promotes women's creativity, establishes a network between woman filmmakers from different parts of the world. Through films, addresses issues of violence, inequality, discrimination and other problems related to women's rights and gender problems.

Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: continuing.

Les 11% (Montpellier, France <https://lesonzepourcent.wordpress.com/>)

Montrer l'autre moitié de l'histoire du cinéma, sélection de films réalisés par des femmes/ Shows the other half of cinema history, with a selection of films directed by women.

Online, one film each week, with description of film, trailer and link to French VOD.

2025: online resource only.



London Feminist Film Festival (London UK)

Aims to inspire discussion and activism, to support women directors, and to get feminist films seen by a wider audience

Covid status: having a break, hopes to be back soon, active on social media.

2025: defunct.

La Mostra Internacional de Films de Dones/Barcelona
International Women's Film Festival (Barcelona, Spain
<https://www.mostrafilmsdones.cat/es/>)

Aims to promote films directed by women and give visibility to women's audiovisual culture. *La Mostra distribucions* the distributor of many of the festival films. *La Mostra edicions* is designed to host publications in various formats that continue the knowledge circuit generated during the festival.



Covid status: ongoing programmes.

2025: continuing.

MujerDOC - International Film Festival on Gender (Soria, Spain <https://www.mujerdoc.com/>)

Platform for exhibition of documentary films created to help eliminate gender stereotypes and make visible the role of women in the development of society. Includes topics related to the demands for equality and the feminist agenda.



Covid status: hybrid 2022.

2025: continuing.

Olhares do Mediterrâneo — Women's Film Festival (Lisbon, Portugal <https://www.olharesdomediterraneo.org/the-festival/>)



Exhibits work of female filmmakers from Mediterranean countries building on partnership with Films Femmes Méditerranée, (Marseille, France) and others.

Covid status: IRL 2021.

2025: continuing.

Porto Femme (Porto, Portugal <http://portofemme.com/>)

International film festival which aims to give visibility to the work of women filmmakers. Also collaborates with **Films Femmes Méditerranée**.



Promover os trabalhos artísticos realizados por mulheres e ainda evidenciar através dos mesmos e do desenvolvimento de actividades de carácter cultural, cívico e social, os direitos das mulheres e da igualdade de género.



Covid status: virtual, with workshops.

2025: continuing.



Remake. Frankfurt Women's Film Days/Frankfurter Frauen Film Tage (Frankfurt, Germany <https://www.remake-festival.de/>)

Biennial mixture of festival and symposium. Kinothek Asta Nielsen has promoted film work by women for nearly twenty years through film presentations, thematic programmes, exhibitions and retrospectives, facilitating the discussion of gender relations in film.

Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025:continuing.



RVK Feminist Film Festival (Reykjavík, Ísland)

Aims to strengthen female and non-binary film directors/makers and equalize the gender representation in the industry.

Covid status: virtual 2021, 2022 plans.

2025: defunct.



Sguardi Altrove/Looks Elsewhere International Film Festival (Milan, Italy)

Aims to research and promote films and videos made by women and encourage reflection on topics relevant to them, articulated in their specific cultural, political and social context.

Covid status: hybrid (Theme: Next Generation, (Post) Pandemic and Resilience: Women's Gaze on the Cinema of the Future)

2025: continuing, based on Facebook.



Some Prefer Cake — Bologna Lesbian Film Festival
(Bologna, Italy <https://someprefercakefestival.com/>)

Created by lesbian activists Luki Massa and Marta Bencich, the festival is promoted by the Luki Massa Association with the goal to continue Luki's work focused on supporting independent movies, artistic projects and political narratives.

Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: continuing.



Tricky Women/Tricky Realities (Vienna, Austria
<https://www.trickywomen.at/en>)

Focuses on animated films made by women. Includes themed programs and retrospectives to present an exciting overview of the animated cinematic art of female artists from around the world and Austrian filmmakers as well. Historical curiosities and contemporary productions, animated documentaries, student works and cinematographic reflection on the complex work/society are festival anchors. Exhibitions, workshops and Best Practice afternoons. Contributes to other festivals.

Covid status: Online 2021, 2022.

2025: continuing.

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Underwire Film Festival (UK)

The UK's largest festival celebrating female talent across the crafts. Aims to change the face of the industry from the inside out. Has awarded training and mentoring opportunities to a decade of film-makers and has screened over 800 films. A BAFTA recognised film festival.



Covid status: postponed to 2022.

2025: closed since 2022 edition.

VisualizaMe (Segovia, Spain <http://www.inquietarte.es/>)

Short films.

Covid status: hybrid 2021.



2025: continuing.

What If? Women in Film Festival (Zurich, Switzerland)

Documentaries by and about women. Celebrates women, their inner strength, courage, determination and resilience. Women have their own unique way to tell stories and **What If? Women in Film Festival** provides a platform and a world stage for them to rise up and to express their voices. When women support each other, incredible things happen.



Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: defunct.

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Women of the Lens (London, England
<https://womenofthelens.com/>)

Aims to create industry partnerships that nurture talent and build careers, develop audience engagement, highlight, celebrate and share achievement, engage wider and local community, contribute to the wider discourse around race, diversity, industry and education, with a vision to form productive and reciprocal representations.



Covid status: virtual 2021.

2025: continuing.

Women Over 50 Film Festival (London, UK
<https://wofff.co.uk/#content>)

Champions and showcases the work of older women on screen and behind the camera with an annual short film festival and year round events and film screenings.



Covid status: hybrid 2022.

2025: continuing.

Women X (Stockton-on-Tees, England
<https://riannepictures.com/womenx>)

Showcases short films from women and non-binary filmmakers. Run by Rianne Pictures, an independent production company that aims to increase the female voice within the film industry.



Covid status: hybrid 2021, partnering with Leeds International Film Festival.

2025: continuing.

OCEANIA



Wanuri Kibiu & MP Jan Logie at NZ Parliament screening 2018

#DirectedByWomen Aotearoa New Zealand

Pop-up events with in-depth Q &As. Sometimes part of **Directed By Women's** September-based global programme. But often in

response to an exciting opportunity. Includes docos, features & web series.

Covid status: uncertain 2021.

2025: on hiatus.

Fem&ist Films (Melbourne, Australia)



Mission to explore and undermine asymmetrical power dynamics through film and the broader media apparatus. Organises screenings, writes lectures and jumps on the campaign trail when the occasion calls for it.

Covid status: uncertain.

2025: defunct.



Femflix Film Festival (Brisbane, Australia <https://femflix.com>)

Quarterly showcase and competition screening the best stories made by women and female-identifying filmmakers. Short films (narrative or factual) from all around the globe, offering awards in various categories along with a non-exclusive license agreement to stream and earn revenue for a 3-month window on Femflix streaming service, geo-blocked outside Australia and New Zealand.

Focuses on female-driven stories, independent female directors, producers, writers, actresses, cinematographers, and all female artists contributing to the language of cinema as women in film.

Covid status: virtual.

2025: 'Something new is coming.'



Melbourne Women in Film Festival (Melbourne, Australia
<https://mwff.org.au/>)

Celebrates and supports the work of women filmmakers and creatives. Short films and web series from women filmmakers working in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the island nations of the wider Moana Oceania. Encourages submissions from First Nations women, women of colour, women with disability and deaf communities, and LGBTIQ-identified women.

Covid status: hybrid 2021; 2022 planned.

2025: continuing.



Sydney Women's International Film Festival (Sydney Australia
<https://www.swiff.org.au/>)

A film festival for women, by women. SWIFF is a place where female filmmakers are celebrated, supported, and can network.

Covid status: hybrid 2021.

2025: continuing.

Part Two

#WOMENINFILM DATABASES



INTRODUCTION



Less than a decade ago, although women producers were common, many people believed that there weren't many women directors, writers or crew. But they existed. Now, many of the databases here document them and are resources where workers can register and potential employers can check them out.

Destri Martino's The Director List (now taken down, but still on social media in 2021) was the first database of women screen workers that I saw, in early 2013. Others have proliferated, especially in the last few years.

For instance, at Cannes in 2019, Downton Abbey actor Victoria Emslie announced the launch of Primetime (<https://primetime.network/>). It would work 'to overcome the bias that traditionally affects women within the industry,' Victoria said. 'To this effect, there are no profile pictures of members [though some are depicted on the site's front page] and Primetime includes testimonials to help overcome the word-of-mouth based referral culture that prevails in the industry. The focus is on the achievements of members, showcasing the quality of their work.'

‘Currently men outnumber women anywhere from 2:1 to 3:1 onscreen. Women tend to hire more women which leads to more female-led content being made; so to change the conversation onscreen we need to change the conversation behind the screen,’ Victoria explained at the launch. ‘At Primetime we hope our mission will be met with a united front and desire to drive towards better work culture and hiring practices, in addition to hiring some pretty badass women.’^a

Women who wish to be included in the database must have at least three credits from IMDb, major theater companies, or APA-registered companies. According to Victoria, also part of Time’s Up UK, the database is open to ‘all those who experience oppression as women, including non-binary and gender non-conforming people, and all those who identify as women.’

Then, in late 2020, Ava DuVernay’s Array founded Array Crew, an equal opportunity and non-profit platform, with a mission to support professionals in the film and television industry from under-represented populations, with support from all major Hollywood Studios and streaming services and various philanthropic agencies and individuals.^b

Not all the databases here are designed to encourage hiring. For instance, Barbara Ann O’Leary of #DirectedByWomen says that her Global Directory ‘was never designed to provide people with hiring lists, though there are thousands and thousands of women included in the directory that would be wonderful to hire’.

Some aren’t formally databases but are well-established go-to organizations for finding #WomenInFilm, like Women in Film & Televi-

^a 2025: reference links now broken.

^b <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/tv/story/2020-12-29/ava-duvernay-peter-roth-hollywood-diversity-array-crew-database>

sion International and Film Fatales; #juststartwith8hollywood isn't a database but developed out of a database initiative.

And none of them can replace direct action within the wider industry, like Ava DuVernay's commitment to hiring only women directors in every season of *Queen Sugar*. Or mk2_Film's commitment to women directors. (mk2 Films also distributes a rich selection of women-directed films in France and internationally, including Agnès Varda's work.)^c

But the databases and related organizations help create supportive communities. Just like women's film festivals. They are fascinating. I love them and their diversity.

Here are those that I know about! Let me know if you have another one to add?

^c In 2025, I'm not sure that this commitment continues. <https://mk2films.com/en/>

DATABASES

THE A-LIST



Warm thanks to **Directed By Women's** Barbara Ann O'Leary and Luísa Pécora of the beautiful **Mulher no Cinema**,^a for their support and additions.

GENERAL

The A-List (<http://ladima.africa/a-list/>)

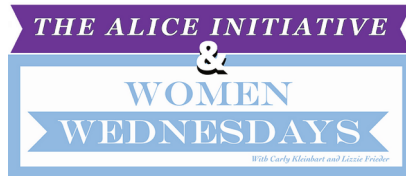
Aims to create a comprehensive Pan-African database of women working within the TV, film, content, animation and related industries. All women, from those just starting out in the industry, to seasoned professionals, are invited to submit their details to this list.

Part of the Ladima Foundation, a Pan-African non-profit organisation committed to providing training and development opportunities for women filmmakers and content producers from Africa via the Ladima Academy. Ladima also focuses on festival development via The Ladima Foundation African Women Film Festivals Network.

^a <https://mulhernocinema.com/>

2025: continuing.

The Alice Initiative (<https://www.thealiceinitiative.com/>)



Group of studio executives and producers who want to see more female directors at the helm of our films. Annual and cumulative list of women directors, partnership with Women Wednesdays.^b

2025: website last updated 2022.

Amplify Database

For television writers of color. Launched by the Creative Artists Agency in 2018.^c Registered users can able to filter the database based on gender, ethnicity, and most recent or highest level writing position to generate a list specific to the user's needs.

2025: defunct.

Array Crew (<https://www.arraycrew.com>)

Equal opportunity platform 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, supporting professionals in the film and television industry from

^b 2025: Women Wednesdays are defunct.

^c <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2018/06/christy-haubegger-launches-amplify-database-at-creative-artists-agency-to-promote-hollywood-diversity>

underrepresented populations. Includes, but is not limited to, women of all kinds and individuals of African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and descend from the Pacific Islands. With support from all the major Hollywood studios and streaming services.

2025: continuing.

Barb Crew (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSejbgJVe-bvu_mJiOxOLNeHD-Soklrc8QgZjGfponDpRwjzkcQ/viewform)

Online collective for women in film. A platform where professionals can connect, work together and ultimately raise each other up.

‘Producers, directors, editors, designers, animators, we know you’re out there, they know you’re out there. Let’s make it so easy to find you, there won’t be an excuse not to.’

Working in partnership with other organisations, Barb aims to create an online database which can provide easily searchable contact information of women in the UK film or television industry, free of charge.

‘With only 20% of the six key roles in films produced in the UK in 2015 going to women, we are determined to level the playing field.’

2025: uncertain.

Black Women Directors (<https://www.blackwomendirectors.co/>)

Website dedicated to highlighting the work of women and nonbinary filmmakers from the African Diaspora. Ongoing project designed to shine a light on the contributions of Black women to the film canon. Started out as a Tumblr in 2015, founded by Danielle

A. Scruggs, a photographer, photo editor, and writer based in Chicago.

2025: continuing.

Black Women Film! (<http://www.blackwomenfilm.ca/>)

Run by and for Black women in film, based in Toronto. A leadership program and new collective dedicated to forwarding the careers, networks and skills of filmmakers and media artists who are Black female identified of the Canadian African diaspora.

2025: continuing.

Chicana Directors Initiative (<https://chicanadirectorsinitiative.org>)

Aims to create a solid foundation of Latina directors and Latina cinematographers and successfully immerse the members into sustainable careers in the entertainment industry with fair representation and equal pay.

Goals: To be seen, to create content bigger than the 'diversity' film festivals, and to garner studio work. Any female-identifying director or female-identifying DP of Latina descent is welcome to join.



2025: continuing.

Cine-Sisters Collective (<https://www.cinesisters.com/about>)

Inclusive organisation based in Peterborough UK, committed to uplifting and amplifying the voices of all female directors.

‘Our goal is to share our experience and resources with each other in order to create more films by and about women. We run monthly masterclasses, surgeries, a writers group, a TV creators group and we support each other’s releases.’

To join **Cinesisters** you need to be a female identifying director who has either made a feature film, has a broadcast TV credit, or has made at least 3 short films and is attached to direct TV or a feature film that is either in funded development or a completed first draft.

Collective run by volunteers who are also working directors so if slower than usual to respond, could be on set.

2025: continuing.

. . .

Cut Throat Women (<https://www.cutthroatwomen.org/about>)

Database of women who work in horror: directors, producers, screenwriters, film festivals. Site includes other resources.



2025: not recently updated.

Directed by Women (<http://directedbywomen.com/>)

Database (<https://directedbywomen.com/en/directedby.html>) today includes 12,678 directors and multi-purpose site provides information about the annual, global, #DirectedByWomen party every September and elements like an all-2019 daily blog of the 21st century canon of women's films. Created by Barbara Ann O'Leary.

2025: no longer updated.

Film Fatales (<https://www.filmfatales.org/>)

Supports an inclusive community of women feature film and television directors who meet regularly to share resources, collaborate on projects and build an environment in which to make their films. Began in New York, now all over the US, in Canada, South Africa and Australia. Not primarily a database, but a useful point of contact and support.

2025: continuing.

. . .

Free the Work

A nonprofit global, curated, talent discovery platform for underrepresented creators. Curated talent-discovery platform for underrepresented creators that grew out of Free The Work, that advocated on behalf of women directors for equal opportunities to bid on commercial jobs in the global advertising industry.

Has expanded to include 1st ADs; ACs; gaffers; grips; production designers; photographers; and best boys.

2025: defunct, after wide success.^d

Glass Elevator

Created by Jen McGowan.

Free, membership-based international community of over 3,000 vetted women offering classes, social events, job postings and a searchable member directory.

Membership grants you access to peer to peer career advancement classes, social events, a searchable database of the Member Directory.

^d 2024: 'After eight years together and many unforgettable moments, we are transitioning our database. Together, we have disrupted the hiring practices of the advertising world, carved opportunities for creators around the globe and built a vibrant, inclusive community.

Thank you for being at the heart of our journey since our beginnings as Free The Bid. Your creativity and resilience have inspired us every step of the way.

This isn't goodbye; it's see you down the road.

With gratitude,

Alma, The Board of Directors, and the FTW Team' (https://www.instagram.com/p/C7nQj5dvPzE/?img_index=1)

Glass Elevator members are executives, talent, above the line, heads of departments and crew from script through criticism. Members hail from every union and guild. Some are Emmy and Academy Award winners.

2025: defunct.

JTC List (<http://thejtclist.com/>)

Extensive, searchable database of women of color who work in the film industry, both in Los Angeles and around the world. Referenced by studios and production companies to help guide hiring for both above and below the line positions, and make sure that every set is inclusive.

Part of **Women of Color Unite**, a social action non-profit organisation focusing on fair access, fair treatment and fair pay for women of color in all aspects of the entertainment and media industries (<https://network.wocunite.com/>).

Named after Joan Theresa Curtis, founder Cheryl Bedford's mother, a statistician and activist, who passed away in February 2016.

2025: continuing.

Katahirine - Rede Audiovisual das Mulheres Indígenas (Audiovisual Network of Indigenous Women) (<https://katahirine.org.br/> English and Spanish)

Network to connect, strengthen and give visibility to the work of indigenous female filmmakers in Brazil. Can search for filmmakers in different parts of Brazil on website, read their bios and watch some of their films for free.

2025: continuing.

La Bible 50x50 (<https://www.bible5050.fr>)

Inclusive list of audiovisual professionals, in almost 70 different occupations, all based in France. Another initiative from Le Collectif 50/50 and supported by Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée, France TV and others (<https://collectif5050.com/en/about/>).

2025: continuing.

Media Stakeholders Directory

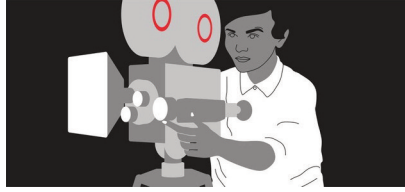
For people of color to find job opportunities in the creative industries.^e

2025: defunct, with change of direction to Multicultural Media & Correspondents Association (MMCA, <https://www.mmca.org/>)

Nordic Women in Film (<https://nordicwomeninfilm.com/about/>)

Knowledge bank and source of inspiration about women in the Scandinavian film industry. Our ambition is to try to set the record straight by re-writing the history of moving pictures in the Nordic region from a feminist point of view. We want to enrich film history, fill in gaps and allow more people to take part in creating that history in the future.

^e <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2018/06/christy-haubegger-launches-amplify-database-at-creative-artists-agency-to-promote-hollywood-diversity>



Swedish Film Institute initiative, as part of its work toward equality within the Swedish film industry. Collaboration between the Swedish Film Institute, the University of Stockholm, the National Library of Norway, and the University of Copenhagen, with help from the Danish Film Institute. The Swedish Film Institute acts as host.

2025: continuing.

Panimation (<http://www.panimation.tv>)

Directory of women, trans and non-binary friends working with animation and motion graphics.

Founded by 3 friends: Bee Grandinetti, Hedvig Ahlberg, and Linn Fritz, built by over 4000 women, trans and non-binary friends from all over the world, working within the many different fields and specializations of animation and motion graphics. No more excuses for male-only studios, speaker line-ups and director rosters. Diversity exists, it's got skills and it's here.

2025: continuing.

Primetime (<https://primetime.network>)

Helps you find the right woman for the job: hire inclusive & vetted gender-balanced teams working above and below the line behind the camera today.

Endorsed by guilds, unions and societies.

2025: continuing.

#Startwith8Hollywood

Diversity, equity and inclusion programme from visionary and generous Thuc Nguyen of the **Bitch Pack** and the **Bitch List**,^f **JTC**'s Cheryl L Bedford and a volunteer committee including Manon de Reeper and Shelby Kovant.

Connects each well-established industry mentor to eight women of colour working in the entertainment industry. Together, mentors and mentees formulate a plan of action based on what each mentee desires and what is achievable by the mentor to create tangible progress in the mentee's career.

The end goal: no more excuses. By fostering organic diversity, the indefensible precept 'I don't know any Women of Color who I can hire', will never be heard again.

Its first cycle, completed June 2020, connected nearly 300 women of colour working in the entertainment industry and at different stages of their careers to established industry mentors. New friendships were forged, referrals were made, advice was freely shared. Now on its third cycle.

UK edition supported by the British Film Institute and led by Akua Gyamfi of The British Blacklist. Canadian edition.

2025: On hiatus? Most recent call out 2024.

^f Established in 2014 to find the best script in Hollywood that passed the Bechdel Test (<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/TheBechdelTest>) and improved representation for women, and POC, paving the way for all kinds of people of various genders, abilities, sizes, and orientations to be included. The goal: for those who have been relegated to the side lines to have their well-deserved time in the spotlight. Next edition 2022, run by the WRAC group, now disbanded.

Topple List

Joey Soloway's **Topple List** (toppling the patriarchy!) of culture creators was an open Google doc.

2025: defunct.



Women in Animation Talent Database
(<https://wearewia.org/mission-vision-values/>)

Part of a broad programme with global reach. Created to increase visibility of vast, multi-faceted, and international pool of underrepresented talent. Women, trans, and non-binary candidates in the animation industry can add themselves to the database to be verified.

Information available and presented to studios across the industry, employers able to filter database according to animation-specific factors including: gallery view which can be used to compare art styles side by side, feature vs series experience, CG pipeline experience, and contact info and availability from candidates that choose to disclose that information.

2025: continuing.

Women in Media's #WiMCrewList (<https://womenn-media.com/crew-list/>)

Tema Staig's #WiMCrewList gives members access to a jobs board, rental house and events discounts, as well as the ability to apply to a #HireTheseWomen Initiative.

2025: continuing.

Women in Film Pioneers Project (<https://wfpp.columbia.edu/>)

Based at Columbia University, features silent-era producers, directors, co-directors, scenario writers, scenario editors, camera operators, title writers, editors, costume designers, exhibitors, and more to make the point that *they were not just actresses*, and has lots of extra interesting info!

2025: continuing.



Women in Film & Television International
(<https://www.wifti.net/membership/>)

A global network with 50 partners and chapters, dedicated to advancing professional development and achievement for women working in all areas of film, video and other screen-based media. Not primarily a database but a useful point of contact and support.

2025: continuing.

Women Making Films (India, <https://www.wmfindia.com/about>)

Founded by Vaishnavi Sundar. Provides a platform for female filmmakers worldwide to network, collaborate and create works in the audio-visual medium.

2025: continuing.

ART DIRECTORS ONLY

Brada Coletivo - Diretoras de Arte do Brasil (Brazilian Art Directors) (www.bradacoletivo.com)

Collective of art directors who work in Brazil. Formed by women, transgender people, non binary people and 'all other forms of minority gender expression'. Website has bios and contact information for all members, and you can search for them by the region of Brazil as well.

2025: continuing.

CINEMATOGRAPHERS ONLY



Indian women cinematographers

DAFB - Coletivo de Mulheres e Pessoas Transgênero do Departamento de Fotografia do Cinema Brasileiro (Collective of Women and Transgender People in Cinematography in Brazilian Cinema) (www.dafb.com.br)

Collective of cinematographers. Started 2016 and is formed by cis and transgender women, as well as transgender men and nonbinary

people. Portfolios and contact information for all their members through their website.

2025: continuing.

Illuminatrix (<https://www.illuminatrixdops.com/about>)

Collective of professional female cinematographers based in the UK and working internationally, with the most gorgeous where individual members choose and talk about images.

2025: continuing.

International Collective of Female Cinematographers (<http://icfcfilm.com/>)

Collective of professional female cinematographers, who provide each other with community support and industry advocacy. Global.

2025: continuing.

CinematographersXX (US, <https://www.cinematographersxxx.com/contact-about>)

Resource to find and hire cinematographers who identify as women. Inclusive and supportive, while maintaining a high standard of experience and works.

2025: continuing?

Indian Women Cinematographers Collective (India, <http://www.iwcc.in/>)

forum by and for craftswomen/ technicians of the film industry, based in India. Intends to make a difference in the industry through our growing numbers, and believes this is possible only when standing together.

Also designed for contemporaries to showcase their diverse body of work. Extends solidarity to fellow craftswomen and the non-cis male technicians and workers in the film industry.

2025: continuing.

FILM COMPOSERS ONLY

Alliance for Women Film Composers (<http://www.theawfc.com/>)

Community of composers and colleagues who strive to support and celebrate the work of women and gender diverse composers through advocacy and education. Includes a directory (<https://www.theawfc.com/members/>).

2025: continuing.

WRITERS ONLY

Muslim Women Writers in Film/TV 2019 (https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15k3yL6jq9irfN-vl6laDo83YTtT_UNoZEfO_cNTLDIU/edit#gid=0)

Google doc only?

2025: Uncertain.

AFTERWORD 2021

Today, at the end of this project, which has taken a while, I'm asking myself: 'Is there still a place for these film festivals and for databases that promote and support women-identified practitioners?'

Change has come. Although an overt continuum of gender has displaced the traditional female-male binary, only some of the listed festivals and databases explicitly welcome non-binary participants. How have the other festivals adapted to this new reality?^a And that's not all. As Jane Campion said in a recent interview '...since #MeToo happened [in 2017], I have been watching a change in the weather that is absolutely substantial...it is like the Berlin Wall coming down.'^b

This view's supported by a quick look at some of the prestigious awards women directors have won over the last few years, even though it's still difficult for us to find resources and we're still not

^a As well, in 2025 the focus on 'inclusion' is anyway now far broader, see for example the Inclusion Lists from USC Annenberg's Inclusion Initiative <https://www.inclusionlist.org/>)

^b <https://www.screendaily.com/news/metoo-movement-is-as-seismic-as-the-berlin-wall-coming-down-says-jane-campion/5162950.article>

well-represented in films selected for 'A-List' festivals. In 2019 Mati Diop's *Atlantiques* won the Grand Prix at Cannes, second to the Palme d'Or. In 2020, Chloe Zhao won the Leone d'Oro (Best Film) at Venice for *Nomadland*, followed by two Oscars in 2021, for Best Film and Best Director. This year, Julia Ducournau won the Palme d'Or at Cannes, for *Titane*, the first woman winner since Jane Campion won for *The Piano* in 1993. And, at Venice this week, Jane Campion won the Leone d'Argento (Best Director) for *The Power of the Dog* and Audrey Diwan — a member of Collectif 50/50 — won the Leone d'Oro for *L'Événement*.

Noting that 'when the film industry is in turmoil ... the benefit goes to women working in it: 41% of [Spain's 2021 Goya Awards] nominations went to women compared to 21.5% in ... 2020,' Carlota Álvarez Basso of Cine por Mujeres asked: 'Is this trend the result of the struggles for the presence of women in the audiovisual world? Is it the consequence of the normalization of a natural process of greater parity in the sector? In Spain, is it the product of the new valuation quotas for the participation of women in technical teams by the Institute of Cinematography and Visual Arts?'^c

'Or is it', Carlota continued, 'as the filmmaker Belén Funes suspected, because male directors ...left the party? ...I feel that it is a very odd year to be evaluated in normal terms. Men have saved their big budget movies to be released next year because there weren't going to be people in theaters this year. We are at a party where those who usually come are not there.' Carlota concluded, 'We believe that this good harvest of 2021 has been the result of the sum of all these factors.'^d

Festival di Cinema e Donne Firenze's view was more similar to Jane Campion's. A distinguished festival in its fifth decade, in a

^c <https://www.festivalcinepormujeres.com/en/editorials/editorial-to-the-2021-edition>

^d Ibid.

September note for its 2021 edition, now unavailable, it wrote ‘The women directors who have their own gaze, whatever the way we want to call it, according to the cultural fashion of the moment, are getting out of the margins, finally recognized, nominated and awarded... We are at a turning point in the relationship between cinema and women...[We suffer] the shock wave and this program, which we will reveal to you little by little, proves it.’

The shock wave wasn’t quite what the festival expected. It had to cancel its usual rich programme at the last moment, because of funding problems, described in a long press release on its Facebook page on 6 November. Was this a sign that funding agencies believe that women filmmakers’ recent successes mean that support for women’s film festivals is no longer necessary?

This is scary, because as Jane Campion also noted in her interview, statistics are still not in the favour of women and that female filmmakers remain under-represented as a whole: ‘The great loss for everyone is that there is just not enough voice in the narrative describing who we are.’^e

That’s enough reason to continue to support and participate in women’s film festivals, where we, in all our rich diversity, are the primary voice in the narrative. There we describe who we are and describe our worlds. There we interact with and grow audiences.

There, and through participation in specialist databases, we also build skills and social capital within our professional networks, among those who share at least some of our lived experience, including our lived experience as filmmakers. This matters too. As Jane Campion acknowledged in another recent interview: ‘There’s a bit of a women’s mafia’ for her, but it is ‘slim’.^f We need to grow the

^e <https://www.screendaily.com/news/metoo-movement-is-as-seismic-as-the-berlin-wall-coming-down-says-jane-campion/5162950.article>

^f <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-features/jane-campion-the-power-of-the-dog-interview-1235010819/>

mafia for all of us and specialist film festivals and databases are good places to start.

Finally, I want to acknowledge that the #MeToo change was nourished by activism before 2017. Remember that saying about luck being what happens when preparation meets opportunity? Lots of preparation for those lucky post-2017 opportunities was undertaken by activists who worked hard in the decades before then.

Tarana Burke is the activist, community organizer and executive who coined the phrase #MeToo, back in 2006, in a campaign designed to facilitate healing for survivors of sexual assault and to train them to work in communities of colour. But women's film festivals are also a significant part of the preparation for the post #MeToo changes, over almost five decades. Let's remember and appreciate them.

And, whatever the reasons for this year's successes, the *Festival di Cinema e Donne Firenze*'s experience tells us that change is often fragile, especially when times are as hard as they are for all artists right now. Go, women's film festivals! Go, the databases that support us! We still need you all, I reckon.

– Marian Evans November 2021

Part Three

**#DIRECTEDBYWOMEN #AOTEAROA,
2018-2020**

INTRODUCTION

BARBARA ANN O'LEARY & DIRECTED BY WOMEN

When she established Directed By Women #DirectedByWomen, a Worldwide Film Viewing Party in 2015, Barbara Ann O'Leary, the catalyst, did not envision that she would shape this party. Instead, she provided the infrastructure so a global community could respond to her invitation to relish and share films by women directors. The last #DirectedByWomen Barbara initiated was in 2024. The website is still there.^a

I think I first met Barbara on Twitter and in 2016 I read a beautiful interview with her by Alexandra Hidalgo from agnès films.^b And, as one of those who responded to Barbara's call, I felt free, with others and over three years 2018-2020, to organise pop-up screenings of work from Aotearoa's women directors and others who live and

^a <https://directedbywomen.com/>

^b <https://agnesfilms.com/interviews/interview-with-barbara-ann-oleary-catalyst-for-directedbywomen/>

work elsewhere. The series — not always within the September framework — ended when Covid began. This section documents various aspects of it, in reprinted interviews and articles from my blogs, *Wellywoodwoman* on Blogger and *@devt* on Medium. It's a thank you to Barbara, as well as to all those women who contributed to the project from within and outside Aotearoa.

#DIRECTEDBYWOMEN #AOTEAROA & SPIRAL

In the beginning, the audiences were small. But they grew and grew and the last two screenings, in Parliament's Theatre, were absolutely full. This gradual increase was typical of Spiral projects. And the more costly aspects, like Wanuri Kahiu's visit, would have been impossible without the support of Lynne Ciochetto, who'd long been involved in Spiral projects as a designer within various collectives. Always cheerful and uplifting and generous. I miss her.

So what else from Spiral characterised this project, and its record in my blogs, which were also offshoots of my PhD, which explored gender and development of feature films in Aotearoa?

There was of course the 'What if?' element already referred to in the Preface, above. In Spiral, 'What if?' usually means devising public experiments that aim to explore and amplify women's lived experience, expressed in text or in a visual medium, as fiction or non-fiction and — to make them accessible — providing them at the lowest cost possible.

There was also a multidimensional approach to the events. Yes, they were all about celebrating and amplifying women-directed works and their makers. But they were mostly themed, too, like our Spiral

books, our Women's Gallery exhibitions, our Spiral literary and arts journal. Yes, the effects of discrimination, injustice and under-representation affected getting the work itself done, when making *Even Dogs Are Given Bones*, *Minimum*, *Rafiki*, the group of webseries, *Half the Picture*, *This Changes Everything*, *Radiogram*, and *13th*. But the works themselves focused the effects of discrimination, injustice and under-representation as they affected others: women workers and their rights; authentic and diverse realities that don't usually make it onto screens, including open expression of lesbian sexuality; oppression of a Muslim community; mass incarceration. And the discussions that followed the screenings usually demonstrated that the audiences were deeply engaged.

The collectivity was also fully there, within Spiral's characteristic framework, where no-one expects to be paid or wants to make money or reputation from a project's success. This time, the relationships within institutions and organisations were part of that — MPs Grant Robertson and Jan Logie, Raewyn Tate in Jan's office and the workers in the Beehive Theatre; Libby Hakaraia, Madeleine de Young and Oriwa Hakaraia among the vibrant, inspiring, Māori-land community; Ness Simons at Whitirea Polytechnic's Te Auaha; Kathryn Bennett at the Rialto Cinema; and with other individuals like Annie Collins, Lorna Kanavatoa, Pachali Brewster and Louise Hutt who helped with the organisation of some or all of the screenings. Everyone who helped is — I hope — listed in the acknowledgments, with special appreciation for the expert help of those from other generations than 'old' Spiral; and for the ongoing decades-long contributions of photographer Adrienne Martyn^c.

^c <https://adriennemartyn.com/about>

My delight in all this was both a little marred and a little amplified by an accident in 2018, when the collective carried on efficiently. About halfway through the programme, Louise Hutt and I had organised a *Women & Webseries* screening, at the Rialto Cinema in Newmarket, Tāmaki Makarau Auckland. And on the way there I tumbled down a steep flight of wooden steps in Parnell's Ayr Street Reserve. Cracked one ankle and broke the fibula in my other leg. Hobbled to the screening, then went to hospital, driven there by Spiral's Annie Mein. The next day, at short notice Spiral's Cushla Parekowhai, with Jacob Terre and again Annie Mein came to the rescue, caring for Wanuri and her husband; and Cushla also filled in for me in support of Ella Henry, when she ran Wanuri's Q&A at the Rialto. Others helped later, in Pōneke. (Missed spring gardening. Missed all of Wanuri Kahiu's visit. But received some beautiful responses from the many people she inspired and revitalised.)

PART III'S STRUCTURE

The first chapter is background, an overview of the local context when the series began, to acknowledge and celebrate some of the 'Women Who Do It', whose work transformed and continues to transform Aotearoa's screen industry. It continues with interviews and articles that highlight key screen work that I love and want to be sure is remembered.

As always, intentions matter, so the second chapter is about the reasons for the first iteration of #DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa, with more details about its programme in the third, followed by a story about the #DirectedByWomen programme at Mokopōpaki, during its collaborative celebration of Heather McPherson.

The next chapters are about some of 2018's individual events: Isabel Coixet's *The Bookshop* and the Skype interview with her that followed; Wanuri Kahiu's *Rafiki*; Kanya Stewart's *Even Dogs Are Given Bones*; Kathleen Winter and her *Minimum* webseries.



Rialto Auckland 2018 Q&A following Rafiki screening. L - r. Cushla Parekowhai, Wanuri Kahiu, Ella Henry.

The 2019 programme follows, described in a single chapter. It was less complex than 2018's #DirectedByWomen #aotearoa, thanks to a busy, intense, visit by activists from the United States and from the United Kingdom, who were participating in the national *Power of Inclusion Summit*: Hope Dickson Leach, Maria Giese and Nasreen Alkhateeb, all of them directors and activists.^d I'd already interviewed Maria Giese about her remarkable campaign to make Hollywood answerable for their discriminatory practices against women directors, so the next chapter provides an updated version of two interviews with her.

In 2020, the focus was on Bulgarian New Zealander Rouzie Hassanova and her feature film *Radiogram*; and Ava DuVernay's *13th*. Its chapters highlight these.

(2025)

^d <https://www.nzfilm.co.nz/international/showcase/power-inclusion-summit>

2018 THE CONTEXT: WOMEN WHO DO IT

Women's Screen Work in Aotearoa, 2017



Most of the *Waru* writer/directors during a standing ovation at Toronto Film Festival 2017 l-r Josephine Stewart-Te Whiu, Awanui Simich-Pene, Chelsea Cohen, Renae Maihi, Katie Wolfe, Casey Kaa, Paula Jones, Briar Grace-Smith

This is the first of two posts about gender equity in the allocation of Aotearoa New Zealand (AotearoaNZ)'s taxpayer funds to screen-based fictions. After eleven years of learning from many others engaged with this issue, here and around the world, I argue that the agencies responsible for investing taxpayer funds must acknowledge that women writers' and directors' low participation in feature film-making and television drama^a is due to systemic and enduring advantages for men who write and direct; and that it is not women's 'fault'. Because of their systemic flaws, the agencies concerned should complement their collection and use of 'diversity' data with comprehensive gender equity policies and best practices, instead of urging women to enter their 'pipelines' in larger numbers and providing piecemeal programmes designed to 'upskill' women.

I propose that new gender equity policies and practices formally recognise that many diverse and skilled AotearoaNZ women writers and directors already produce accomplished and intersectional work that often reaches a global audience; embed explicit gender equity principles throughout the pipelines to taxpayer-funded feature film-making and television drama, including any decision-making devolved to organisations (e.g. guilds, production houses) and individuals (e.g. assessors); and acknowledge (as has, for instance, Telefilm Canada^b) that it's essential to prioritise gender parity in director and screenwriter roles.

I focus primarily on the the New Zealand Film Commission's (NZFC) gender policies and practices but also refer to New Zealand on Air (NZOA) which funds television and digital programmes, and

^a Statistics here: <https://wellywoodwoman.blogspot.com/p/new-zealand-has-much-smaller-population.html>

^b <https://telefilm.ca/en/news-releases/telefilm-canada-announces-partnership-industry-gender-parity-measures-feature-film-production-financing>

the state-owned TVNZ which commissions television programmes, because it's now problematic to isolate 'cinema' from other forms of creation and distribution. (If you doubt this reality, consider how in Wellington we've been able to binge-watch all of Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake: China Girl* on screens that range in size from the huge Embassy Theatre screen to the screens on our phones. I marvel that my opportunities to consume screen stories has been revolutionised, and that before I sleep, I can hold a book and read text or hold a tablet and read/watch YouTube or VOD, *and* can re-play bits of what I've watched, just as I often re-read pages in books.)

This first part provides the background and highlights Women Who Do It, some writers and directors who work in short-form series and are transforming on-screen representation.

#11.2 will explore some 'pipeline' decision-making issues and provide some concrete suggestions for addressing them, with particular reference to the Swedish Film Institute's policies and practices.^c

THE GRIM REALITY

In February, I read the NZFC Annual Report for the year ending 30 June 2016. The report showed that for the first time in seven years the NZFC offered, on behalf of the taxpayer, well over 50% of its conditional production funding for narrative (fictional) features to projects that women wrote/co-wrote and/or directed/co-directed. Women writers' and directors' participation in applications for development funding were up too. Best of all, the new chair of the

^c #11.2 Gender Equity in Practice' <https://medium.com/womens-film-activism/nz-update-11-2-gender-equity-in-practice-3b1440a522c9> For updates in Sweden, search <http://www.filminstitutet.se/en/> 'gender equity'

NZFC Board had made a statement that acknowledged our gender issues and was proud that the NZFC had taken the first steps to address them. I concluded that the NZFC's gender policy, established in 2015, was getting results, with its commitment to gathering and providing gender-based statistics; investment in 'talent development'; identifying and engaging with women filmmakers; and an annual scholarship.^d

But my optimism was misplaced. In the year ending this June, all eight of the NZFC's offers of conditional production funding went to narrative features that had men as directors. Of the thirteen writers attached to the eight projects, ten were men and three were women. Just one project was written by a woman without a man as a co-writer: Rochelle Bright wrote *Daffodils*, an adaptation of her highly successful stage play. (Women documentarians as usual fared better: they directed two of the six the documentaries offered production funding; and co-directed a third one.)

So, are we back at the beginning, facing another seven years without writer/director gender equity in NZFC investment in narrative feature films?

Maybe not, because the NZFC is consulting with the guilds — in AotearoaNZ they're all funded by the NZFC — and considering its options for gender-based initiatives so that more women writers and directors travel that magic pipeline to feature films.^e

. . .

^d <https://medium.com/womens-film-activism/nz-update-1-gender-breakthrough-in-new-zealand-film-commission-funding-6328f141183d>

^e <https://wellywoodwoman.blogspot.com/p/nzfc-gender-policy-docs-2017.html>

But this consultation seems to reanimate the untenable idea that it's women's fault their/our work isn't funded because they/we don't participate. (It's a bit clumsy, but where necessary I use 'their/our' to acknowledge my own interests as a woman consumer who occasionally makes films; this isn't an academic's post.)

Ever since the NZFC's gender policy was established, I've heard slogans like 'Do It', used in attempts to persuade women writers and directors to participate in various NZFC initiatives, and more recently I've heard institutional endorsement of 'rattling women's cages' so that they/we will participate more enthusiastically in NZFC-funded programmes. Nothing wrong with 'Do It' in general, it can be encouraging to hear. But, with respect, it often isn't helpful to encourage women to engage with a system where, to quote Amanda Cole's excellent *What's Wrong With This Picture?: Directors and Gender Inequality in the Canadian Screen-Based Production Industry*, prepared for the Canadian Unions for Equality on Screen, 'bias is filtered through the decision-making capacities of a complex terrain of industry gatekeepers'; where there is no formal commitment to investing equally in projects with women and men attached as writers and directors; where the established gender equity policy is patchy and the culture is aligned to men's ways of working. As Amanda states (her emphases)–

Key to understanding the issue of gender inequality is an analysis not just of discrimination against women, but of *systemic advantage for men*. Gender inequality in the film and television production industry is a systemic problem that *affects* women. Nonetheless, as [her] body of research clearly shows, the issue is not one created *by*

women. Consequently, solutions to an issue of considerable economic and social significance require an industry-wide effort.^f

The idea that women's low participation in a system that advantages men is women's fault and that women are in some way deficient often generates an emphasis, as at the NZFC, on 'talent development' for women. In theory, if women upskill, if they/we get more experience, their/our work will be stronger, they'll/we'll be less affected by the systemic advantage for men and they'll/we'll apply more often, succeed more often and travel the magic pipeline towards feature films. I disagree, and not just because of the systemic discrimination. I disagree because there's also robust evidence — see below — that there are already many Women Who Do It here in AotearoaNZ, screenwriters and directors who do it very well, often outside the taxpayer-funded systems and sometimes in spite of them.

NZOA's latest *Diversity Report* illuminates gender equity problems in its investments, too. At first reading, there are some hopeful signs. But although the report records that the proportion of women writers and researchers attached to projects that NZOA invested in grew by 13%, to 51%, I later learned that even though 62% of the producers of 'scripted' projects — drama and comedy — were women (down from 68% in 2016), the proportion of women writers attached to these projects decreased 7% from 2016, to only 37% (43% in the few drama projects funded for development). The proportion of women directors of drama decreased by 1% to 10%; the far higher proportion of writers perhaps reflects the presence of women showrunners, who write *and* produce.^g

^f https://methodsandresearch.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/coles_wwwtp_report.pdf

^g The NZOA Diversity Reports continue, most recently for 2023 <https://www.nzonair.govt.nz/news/diversity-report-2023/>

Given these realities, is it time for the NZFC and NZOA to Do It themselves? To rattle their own cages, emulate other taxpayer-funded screen agencies around the world and replace their pipelines with new ones that embody gender equity and other kinds of inclusion throughout their fabric?

I reckon it is. Otherwise we're stuck with beliefs and practices that rely on misrepresentation of facts and misattribution of fault. To state that it's women's fault and they/we must change what they/we do, when it's actually the system's fault, uncomfortably echoes other common and inaccurate statements within the continuum of violence against women, like 'If women don't want to get raped/beaten/killed/silenced they should ... [e.g. dress modestly; be careful what they say and how they say it]'. I'm not exaggerating here, basing this assertion on ideas from Joanna Russ's classic *How To Suppress Women's Writing*; and familiarity with patterns of damaging behaviour that don't include physical violence, as acknowledged for instance in our human rights legislation and our family violence legislation.

The conditions in AotearoaNZ for women who write and direct for the screen are not unique. *Slated* has just published one of its *Filmonomics* pieces, where it debunks the myth that 'there's not enough of a pipeline of qualified female directors' in the States. These are *Slated's* findings—

For every female studio director hired, there were 7 female candidates not hired, compared to 1 in 3 for male directors. Men are hired 2.75 times as often as women, taking relative talent pool sizes into account.

These are *Slated's* conclusions—

The industry needs to do a far better job of cultivating new and existing female directing talent. It can easily be argued that 2017's lackluster box office performance [also true in AotearoaNZ, especially for most of our taxpayer-funded features] is in part a result of the industry's collective cognitive biases coming home to roost. Betting on more female directors isn't increased risk but smart financial and creative diversification that will increase the industry's resilience. It's time for the studios [and the taxpayer funds] to put their money where their mouths are.^h

Often I hear that women filmmakers should be more resilient so it's great to see *Slated's* reference to the need to increase resilience in the industry, instead.

THE WOMEN WHO DO IT

There are (of course) some Women Who Do It who write and direct entirely within taxpayer-funded agencies, many of them included in 'NZ Update #4: Writers & Directors A-Z'.ⁱ Others who make features, often with female protagonists, have little or no involvement with those agencies. Andrea Bosshard for instance. Rose Goldthorp. Bea Joblin. But Women Who Do It are most likely to create fictional short-form series and these are mostly webseries for online distribution. (Documentary webseries are not considered here.) Collectively, over the last couple of years, the combined screentime of women's webseries has probably matched the combined screentime of all the features that the NZFC has funded. Easily. NZOA, unlike the NZFC, has a digital fund and has

^h <https://filmonomics.slated.com/genderjustice-7ofidccfeb8>

ⁱ <https://medium.com/womens-film-activism/new-zealand-womeninfilm-update-writers-directors-a-z-138d2ac60fdf>

supported some of these for production — typically \$100,000 per series. But NZOA says it ‘cannot easily extract *fictional webseries* as a digital data category [and] even if we could, the data sets each year would be very small’, so it’s reasonable to infer that in the overall scheme of its funding allocations NZOA’s investment in webseries is small.

The achievement of *Women Who Do It* in webseries could be understood as secondary to ‘serious’ film and television drama. But I believe that these series are central to the development of women’s storytelling within AotearoaNZ and for the world. I’m inspired by the ideas they explore, the worlds they create and the stories they tell; and impressed that from this small country their creators develop global audiences, both online and at festivals, where they regularly win awards. In general, the webseries experiment with female protagonism and with intersectional representation. They are almost always entertaining, often very funny and usually have high production values (just once I’ve been unable to catch a key punchline). The *Women Who Do It*’s commitment to these short-form series, and their achievement, is especially remarkable because as women they are typically time poor and have limited financial resources.

Some women make webseries *and* develop short and feature films with the NZFC. Others make webseries as a step towards participating in the international trend of highly successful long-form series by and about women and because, as one of the *Women Who Do It* told me, ‘it is satisfying — the characters and story arcs can be more creative with time to play with them, and TV stations [and other commercial platforms] do your marketing for you. And you are employed over a longer period of time’.

. . .

And the Women Who Do It develop and often produce their own webseries as multi-hyphenates; their individual roles shift to and from producer, writer, director, actor, publicist, though there are also some outstanding webseries producers-only like Robin Murphy (*Pot Luck*) and Kerry Warkia (who started as an actor and now executive produces for Flat3 Productions — as Brown Sugar Apple Grunt with her husband Kiel McNaughton — was a writer as well as producer on the webseries *Nia's Extraordinary Life*; and producer of *Waru*, just screened at the Toronto International Film Festival).^j

The women who write and direct short-form series don't come from nowhere: the women of AotearoaNZ have always shone in short-form artistic expression, starting — it seems to me from my limited perspective as a Pākehā, a tauiwi — with indigenous short-forms, honed over centuries and forever evolving. For example, Māori women excel at the various forms of waiata and I believe that the karanga — the opening, formal call and response that Māori women give when groups meet, usually on a marae though also in many other places (I've never forgotten Irihapeti Ramsden's and Miriama Evans's at London's Guildhall, when we accepted Keri Hulme's Booker Prize on her behalf) — is among its many qualities also an art form. Like a fine poem or painting a karanga evokes a visceral response: it opens my heart, connects me to people who are with us and not with us, with time and with place and with purpose; and reminds me to pay attention, to think and act as well as I can.

We also have the ephemeral short-form arts of letter-, journal-, and diary-writing (loving the just-published *He Reo Wāhine: Māori Women's Voices in Colonial New Zealand* by Lachy Patterson and Angela Wanhalla) and the short story brilliance of Katherine Mansfield,

^j <https://www.nzonscreen.com/interviews/Kerry-Warkia>

Janet Frame, Patricia Grace, J C Sturm, Keri Hulme and many others. We have extraordinary practitioners of short-form storytelling in children's picture books: Katarina Mataira, Margaret Mahy, Joy Cowley, Patricia Grace again, Robyn Kahukiwa and others. We have poets: five of our eleven poets laureate have been women. Women have always done well in taxpayer-funded short filmmaking and our participation in the last decade or so has been quite high; the NZFC's own research — a little while ago — records that when women directors make taxpayer-funded short films our work is more likely than men's to be screened at A-list international film festivals. Women wrote and directed four of the six finalists in New Zealand's Best Shorts competition at the New Zealand International Film Festival this year and three last year; this year two finalists, one of them the overall winner, made their films as students, highlighting — for me anyway — how digital natives' participation in screen storytelling is democratising filmmaking at every level.

And serial short films aren't new here. For instance, Joanna Margaret Paul's short films from the 70s are a serial exploration of ideas that she also examined in series of paintings and poems; they regularly screen internationally. Today, women's engagement with short film series appears to be growing. Over the last few weeks I've heard of a sequel to one successful short film from a few years back; and at the end of the latest 48Hours competition, Becca Barnes — lead writer at *Power Rangers* — reported that Squidwig, her long-standing and mixed-gender group, where she co-writes and directs, had made two entries that relate to their entry from last year: '*Squidwig* and *Squidwig 2: Electric Boogaloo* got both our films in on time — and they're BOTH sequels to last year's film. It's a trilogy!'

Then there are two unique series, *Waru* and *Melodrama*. They fit

within other conceptual frameworks, but I think they're also an important part of any consideration of short-form series.

Waru is a new feature film that debuted at the New Zealand International Film Festival, just screened at Toronto, will open imagineNATIVE and will be released in AotearoaNZ cinemas soon. It's structured as an inter-related series of eight single-shot and self-contained short films with Māori women at the centre, made by nine Māori women writers and directors, two of them responsible for each 'episode', each one shot in a single day. *Waru* explores interventions associated with the violent death of a child and, through this, the nexus between the effects of colonisation on a single community and the community's diverse and complex female protagonists. It's breathtaking.



Still from *Waru*

The screening I went to opened with karanga and I experienced the film itself as karanga too, eight powerful and uninterrupted calls and responses that left me fully open and committed to a national conversation about violence towards children;

and wondering if *Waru* is a response to Merata Mita's call in her last film, *Saving Grace*, also about child abuse. Nearly 30 years after the most recent Māori woman-written- and -directed feature, Merata Mita's *Mauri*, *Waru* marks a turning point, the very best kind of turning point because it shows — instead of a solitary, exceptional Māori-woman-writer-and-director for today — a representative cohort of the many contemporary Māori women qualified to write and direct episodic television and long cinematic fictions. As one of *Waru*'s writer-directors, Katie Wolfe, said in a Radio New Zealand interview the other day—

Before *Waru* was made, when it was pitched as an idea, someone quipped “there wouldn’t be eight Māori women in this country that could helm a feature film”, which was just crazy because the women who helmed this feature film were incredibly experienced.^k

I think that *Waru*, funded by the NZFC — among others — also authoritatively signals that it’s time for the NZFC to take short-form series seriously, to make strenuous efforts to find ways of supporting them as well as single short films; and to work with NZOA to incentivise the women who write and direct them to make features and to crossover to making television series.

For me, Ella Yelich-O’Connor’s — Lorde’s — *Melodrama* performances and music videos are also collectively a short-form series, a multi-layered narrative about being a woman and being an artist, where she plays with both meanings of melodrama, as ‘a sensational dramatic piece with exaggerated characters and exciting events intended to appeal to the emotions and a play with songs and orchestral music accompanying the action’. The series, as I view it, includes all her available-online live performances as Lorde, in studios and in concert; and formal videos-made-as-music-videos. And although Ella isn’t formally credited as writer-director I have no doubt that she is the primary creator and co-ordinator and collaborator behind every *Melodrama* episode.

This ongoing series gives me a ‘media convergence’ delight very like my delight when I watched National Theatre Live films^l for the first time, down the road at the Lighthouse Cinema. But I watch Ella’s

^k <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/insight/audio/201858650/insight-women-s-work-and-the-gender-wage-gap>

^l <https://wellywoodwoman.blogspot.co.nz/2013/07/the-audience-media-convergence-audiences.html>

work on my iPad, in bed. As a woman from another generation, with a third generation between us, the delight began when I saw her karaoke *Green Light* performance at the Billboard Music Awards — now gone from the internet as a complete performance — and enjoyed its lovely touches, like the gum-chewing bar patron watching with detached amusement.^m I hear *Liability* as an anthem for women artists of all kinds, and when Lorde performed it on *Saturday Night Live* in a flowing white dress and head dressⁿ I recalled Jane Zusters' classic image, *Portrait of a Woman Marrying Herself*.^o



Lorde performing *Liability* 2017

^m <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/watch-lordes-karaoke-party-take-on-green-light-at-bbmas-w483215>

ⁿ 2025: link gone.

^o (And, weeks after I finished this I found a clip of Marianne Faithfull singing *I Got You Babe* with David Bowie and thought Oh! maybe that was a visual influence, too. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXaCTV3XIy4>) Also: <http://www.janezusters.co.nz/>)



Jane Zusters *Portrait of a Woman Marrying Herself* 1977

Melodrama's formal music videos don't always appeal to me, but I wouldn't miss one of them, because there's always something fresh that extends the work as a whole, like the play with the lightbulb in *Perfect Places*^p and Lorde's delicate keyboard intervention as she sits alongside Jack Antonoff on *Writer in the Dark*,^q accompanied by a four-woman string quartet.

Now to the webseries. It's impossible to keep up with them all but here are some. The first three involve writers and directors whose other work is part of the NZFC's feature pipeline.

^p https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoDjcsK_-HY

^q <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJk6cpNCnNM>

SOME WEBSERIES EXAMPLES



Flat 3 at work: JJ Fong, Ally Xue, Perlina Lau & Roseanne Liang

Flat3 Productions' three series are *Flat3* and *Friday Night Bites* and *Fong Shui Advice & Insight*, made with some funding from NZOA.^r The whole team — Roseanne Liang, Ally Xue, JJ Fong and Perlina Lau — storyboards together, with Roseanne as primary writer-director, although sometimes guest writers or directors contribute. Roseanne also co-wrote and directed the NZFC-funded rom-com *My Wedding & Other Secrets*, won this year's Best Short Film Audience Award for her NZFC-funded *Do No Harm* which tells the backstory of one of the characters in her feature in development, *Black Lotus*; and recently qualified for consideration for an Academy Award.^s The group describes the Flat3 productions as 'packed full of pop culture, cussing and awks-as situations. All smothered in a rich New Zealand accent and garnished with a light grating of intersectional f-word. You know you want it'. (Yes, we do!)

Jessica Hansell, Coco Solid, 'musician, writer, artist and philosoflygirl', writes and appears in the amazing *Only in Aotearoa*.^t

^r <https://www.youtube.com/user/flat3webseries>

^s <https://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/96815524/kiwi-short-film-do-no-harm-earns-oscar-nod-at-manhattan-short>

^t <https://www.maoriplus.co.nz/show/only-in-aotearoa>



Jessica et al in *Only in Aotearoa*

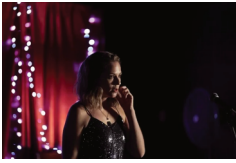
She wrote and co-directed the *Aroha Bridge* webseries^u, an ‘animated snapshot of the multicultural melting pot that is Aotearoa’ that evolved from her comic strip turned animated short, *Hook Ups*, and was funded by NZOA. *Women & Hollywood* described *Aroha Bridge* like this –

Let’s say you combined the family dynamics of *Transparent*, the way *Key & Peele* dissects the myriad expressions of race, and the world-building of *Orange is the New Black*. The result still wouldn’t be as interesting and multi-faceted as *Aroha Bridge* ... *Aroha Bridge* is that rare series that has a defined point-of-view, a balance of specific and universal humor, and the advantage of just being entertaining.^v

Jessica also has an NZFC-funded feature in development.

^u <http://arohabridge.com/>

^v 2025: link gone.



Shoshana McCallum in
Stand Up Girl

Actor and writer Shoshana McCallum and actor-writer-director Aidee Walker have created *Stand Up Girl*, about a sex worker and comedian, written and played by Shoshana, directed by Aidee and inspired by

Lucy Roche, a stand-up comic and sex worker Shoshana saw perform.^w

According to one report, Lucy's set sparked 'a really interesting discussion' among Shoshana's friends after the show –

As feminists, we were on board, but as people ... where do you stand? It was confronting, and weird, and when I found out she was a sex worker, I was surprised ... it came from that really.^x

Shoshana wrote the series with Lucy's 'blessing' and after some further research. I watched all the *Stand Up Girl* episodes in one go and found it a more nuanced inquiry into the world of sex work than *China Girl: Top of the Lake*.

Aidee Walker has written and directed four short films and she too is engaged with the NZFC system. Her *Friday Tigers* won Best Short Film at the New Zealand International Film Festival in 2013. In 2015, she was the Directors & Editors Guild of NZ (DEGNZ)'s TV drama director attachment to SPP's *Westside 2* television series and last year

^w First episode here: <https://www.humans.co.nz/webseriesess>

^x http://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501119&objectid=11879459

she was one of ten women selected for the DEGNZ's inaugural Women Filmmakers Incubator.



The three stars of *Pot Luck*: Tess Jamieson-Karaha, Nikki Si'ulepa, Anji Kreft

There's the brilliant lesbian series *Pot Luck*, written and directed by Ness Simons, with its worldwide audience of more than 2 million, such a pleasure to watch. Its much-anticipated second, NZOA-funded, season is in post-production.^y

And there's The Candle Wasters, too, who made their first series while in high school—

...four young women (and a token dude) from New Zealand, who create fierce, funny, feminist webseries. We started in 2014 with *Nothing Much To Do*, inspired by Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, and have gone on to create *Lovely Little Losers* and *Bright Summer Night*.^z

Their series has had over 5 million views on YouTube, NZOA has funded them several times and they now also have funding through YouTube's Skip Ahead initiative. Their *Happy Playland* is just out, set in a children's playground where one of the characters, an aspiring actress works before it is closed down. Like all great stories, she also falls in love.

. . .

^y <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/pot-luck-2015/series>

^z <https://www.youtube.com/user/thecandlewasters>



The Candle Wasters: Sally Bollinger, Minnie Grace, Claris Jacobs, and Elsie Bollinger

In a recent feature, the collective said of *Happy Playland*—

We wanted women, we wanted a lesbian love story. All our other series had background lesbians... We had all these elements, like a character with anxiety, which we wanted to include.^{aa}

NZOA has also funded their *Tragicomic*,^{bb} on its way.

Baby Mama's Club^{cc} is a comedy drama written and directed by Hanelle Harris, funded by NZOA at the end of 2016.^{dd} It was—

...born out of a desire to see authentic representation of Māori and Polynesian women on screen ... just being themselves ... sassy and fun, sexy and fierce.

It began with a fictional Facebook post^{ee} where a woman appealed for help in finding 'Johnny' the father of her unborn child; the post received a huge response. Hanelle says, in a video about the experiment, that she and her collaborators—

^{aa} 2025: link gone.

^{bb} <http://www.thecandlewasters.com/tragicomic.html>

^{cc} <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBHnqGtNxfY>

^{dd} <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBHnqGtNxfY>

^{ee} <https://www.facebook.com/100012998980641/videos/162690500840915/>



Ir Hanelle Harris, Luciane Buchanan, Suivai Autagavaia, Moana Johnson

... wanted to explore the very real themes that we're looking at in our project which includes what it is to be a woman, to be brown, to be young, to be a mother in New Zealand today. We really wanted to challenge and expose some of the judgement and the misconceptions we feel exist around these issues.^{ff}



from *So This Happened*

And there's Maha Albadrawi and Lucy Zee's superb *So This Happened*,^{gg} real stories of harassment, as told by those who have experienced them, fictionalised through being told through animation and available on demand at TVNZ.^{hh}

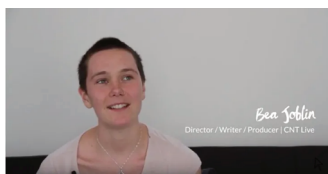
Bea Joblin is a fine example of a witty, thoughtful, digital native, beginning with *The Hutt Valley Dream Project*, moving on to *CNT*

^{ff} <https://www.facebook.com/sophiafolau/videos/166323207144311/>

^{gg} <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/so-this-happened-bekah-and-marama-2017>

^{hh} Now at NZOnscreen Iwi Whitiāhua: <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/so-this-happened-bekah-and-marama-2017>

Live, 'the show that talks about what matters to women, where the only thing missing is yoU!'.ⁱⁱ



Bea Joblin in Louise Hutt's
Online Heroines

Bea also has a feature in post-production, *Births, Deaths & Marriages*.

Most recently there's the charming *Oddly Even*, the pilot written and directed by Ashleigh Reid and Isla Macleod, that won TVNZ's *New Blood* competition.^{jj}



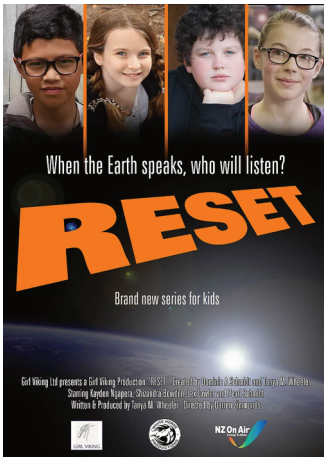
Still from *Oddly Even*

Prolific screenwriter Tanya Wheeler wrote and produced *RESET*, (directed by Darren Simmonds), the award-winning children's sci-fi webseries, about 'kids trying to do the right things against the odds'.^{kk}

ⁱⁱ I loved it, especially this episode: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbA8HAocW2o>

^{jj} <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/oddly-even-series-one-2018>

^{kk} <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/reset/episodes>



It won both MipTV's Digital Short Form Content for Children 2017 competition and the Best webseries at the Los Angeles webseries Festival Global.

Tanya's now made a teaser/trailer for a new television series, called *Realm*,^{ll} aimed primarily at the teen girls/women demographic, which is 'getting great feedback from test readers...has Australian and New Zealand investors and sponsors putting money in to take it to Netflix and the Australian networks and TV studios'. Because of its target audience, Tanya would love to have women directors for *Realm*.

Look beyond all these for more, like *Auckland Love*, just about to start its third season, 'a funny, sexy and almost romantic webseries' created by actor Holly Shervey, and co-written and produced with actor/writer Jess Sayer and actor/director Emmett Skilton.^{mmm}

^{ll} <https://www.thearts.co.nz/boosted/projects/the-realm-teaser-project?tab=about>

^{mmm} <https://www.aucklandloveseries.com/>

WHY & HOW THEY DO IT

Filmmaker Louise Hutt's remarkable *Online Heroines* is an absorbing in-depth webseries about women who make webseries in AotearoaNZ, part of her ground-breaking Masters thesis.ⁿⁿ



Louise Hutt

She found that the *Online Heroines*' definition of success 'is not about making money or being famous'.^{oo} And the Women Who Do It seem to do the work because they can — thanks again, digital revolution — and because they're *compelled* to keep going. Sometimes they tell me that they wish they felt compelled to do something else that *does* provide a living. They do it for love. But let's not call them 'amateurs'. They're not.

It's just as well that the Women Who Do It don't do it for the money because even when NZOA funds webseries it's a financial struggle. In a world where women anyway work an extra unpaid hour a day compared with men (that's the equivalent of 36.5 ten-hour days a year!) and on average earn 9% less than men, it matters that even writers and directors of taxpayer-funded features some-

ⁿⁿ <https://www.youtube.com/@onlineheroines3202>

^{oo} <https://medium.com/women-filmmakers-interviews/nz-update-9-louise-hutt-on-her-online-heroines-9308dd3745b2>

times work without payment. (When finishing her recent NZFC-funded feature *The Inland Road*, Jackie van Beek reported that she'd reached the stage where she was effectively 'paying for the privilege of making the film'.^{pp})

The financial struggle continues right through the process, from development, which often includes a crowdfunding element, to production and post-production, to distribution and audience engagement.

Tanya Wheeler's work on her award-winning *RESET*'s development and pilot was typical, completely unfunded. But –

After a ton of [unpaid] hard work over many months the RESET Children's Sci Fi Web Series has been accepted by Māori Television On Demand and received funding from NZOA.^{qq}

And even with NZOA assistance, the second season of *Pot Luck* needed more money for production and post-production, as the makers explained in their Boosted crowdfunding pitch–

Thanks to funding from the good people at NZ on Air, Wellington City Council Arts & Culture Fund, and Hell Pizza, we've managed to raise the majority of our budget already. This will cover modest fees for our cast and crew, equipment hire and art department, but we still need help for production office costs, location expenses, transporting all that gear around and of course we have to feed people! Plus there's the editing and all the magic that happens in post production, and finally distribution.^{rr}

^{pp} <http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/83857086/Jackie-Van-Beek-producing-two-feature-films>

^{qq} <https://www.boosted.org.nz/projects/reset-childrens-sci-fi-web-series>

^{rr} <https://www.boosted.org.nz/projects/pot-luck-season-two>

Repeated funding success seems to make little difference. In their *Online Heroines episode*, The Candle Wasters are particularly open about their financial struggles.^{ss} They pay their costs, including the costs of employing others. But even with NZOA funding, each of them receives a limited fee, not a wage, and it's not enough to live on, so they all work part time or flexible jobs to make ends meet. In a recent interview, one of the collective says 'We needed to figure out how to pay people properly, otherwise it isn't sustainable'.^{tt} But they still need to work towards making it more sustainable for them as the creators. Others are in the same position. Another webseries maker told me—

[The webseries] has occupied my life for over two years now and I have not had any income from it despite the NZOA funding.

So what compels the Women Who Do It do it? I think it has a lot to do with Building Our Own House(s) and the social elements that are inherent in doing that.

BUILDING OUR OWN HOUSE(S)

^{ss} <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Gkr3dBGFoo> (around 9' in).

^{tt} <http://theresidents.co.nz/blog/2017/9/6/residents-107-108-109-110-wasting-candles-in-a-happy-playland-web-series-creators-the-candle-wasters-on-how-they-got-5-million-youtube-views-diversity-anxiety-and-shakespeare> 2025: link gone.



installation, National Museum of African American History
& Culture (Smithsonian)

Some of the Women Who Do It may have followed the trajectory of Ava DuVernay's success as a screen storyteller for varied platforms (*Selma*, *13th*, *Queen Sugar*, *A Wrinkle in Time*). They may be familiar with her mantra as an African-American filmmaker, articulated most recently in *TIME*— 'It's not about knocking on closed doors. It's about building our own house and having our own door.'

Ava's consistently urged people to 'Create work ... Look at what you have and work with that'. And for her, building her own house has led to many opportunities through other doors, with Netflix as distributors for *13th*, with Harpo Productions and Warner Horizon TV for *Queen Sugar*, with Disney for *A Wrinkle in Time*; Building Our Own House(s) doesn't preclude walking through other doors when they open and someone beckons from within.

Here in AotearoaNZ there's also movement between a now-established settlement of Own Houses. For instance, Nikki Si'ulepa who stars in *Pot Luck* is — like Roseanne Liang — one of the five women

writer-directors in the ten-part short-form series *K' Road Stories*^{uu}, produced by Hazel Gibson and Morgan Leigh Stewart, who are participants in *Online Heroines*^{vv}. Hanelle Harris of *Baby Mama's Club* co-wrote *GirlFight*, an episode in Flat3's *Friday Night Bites*, with its director Roseanne Liang^{ww}, where Malia Albadrawi of *So This Happened* is listed as a producer.



Filming *Girlfight*

And here in AotearoaNZ staunch Māori women provide gender equity leadership of Ava DuVernay quality, but in the tradition of Merata Mita, who died in 2010 and 'is always with us'^{xx}. Merata once said—

Swimming against the tide becomes an exhilarating experience. It makes you strong. I am completely without fear now.

On a panel at the 2015's Big Screen Symposium, one of the *Waru* writer-directors, Chelsea Cohen (Winstanley), with, and supported

^{uu} <http://www.krdstories.com/>

^{vv} <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qZjdEAcTck>

^{ww} <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEnsPH2JtWI>

^{xx} <https://wellywoodwoman.blogspot.co.nz/2010/06/duet-for-merata-mita-1942-2010.html>

by, Briar Grace-Smith and Libby Hakaraia, was our first woman filmmaker to publicly challenge the NZFC to support gender equality in the industry and commit to equal funding of women and men.



NZFC development exec & writer/director/producer chair Karin Williams & writer-directors Briar Grace-Smith, Libby Hakaraia of Māoriland Film Festival, Chelsea Cohen & baby, Big Screen Symposium 2015

Chelsea said, according to Twitter— The NZFC should make a commitment to funding as many female filmmakers as male...We should all be challenging the NZFC to support gender equality in the film industry...Women experience things men can't... like giving birth *points to new baby*. O wow. Not surprised. But totally thrilled, I read and re-read.

This was a red-letter moment, a huge breakthrough. Except for Jane Campion, this is the first time in Aotearoa that any highly achieving woman producer and director made an unequivocal and widely reported public statement that challenges the NZFC to support gender equality and thus encourages and emboldens others ('all' = women *and* men) to do the same.

I'm full of admiration for Chelsea's action, supported by the others who spoke alongside her. I hope that many others will move to

stand beside her. Soon. Regardless, her statement marks a turning point.

So who is Chelsea Winstanley? If you're reading this from outside Aotearoa — as is most likely — you may not have heard of her, nor of the others on the panel. Look out for them!



Karin Williams, Briar Grace-Smith, Libby Hakaraia, Chelsea Winstanley (photo: @multinesia on tumblr)

Chelsea Winstanley^{yy} is a documentary director and a producer whose films include Sam Holst's *Meathead*, selected for Cannes and winner of the Crystal Bear in the Generation (14plus) section of the 2012 Berlinale and Zia Mandviwalla's multi-award-winning *Night Shift*, which premiered in competition at Cannes and Taika Waititi and Jemaine Clement's *What We Do In the Shadows*. Her current projects include *Jojo Rabbit*; and a documentary, *Merata Mita — How*

Mum Decolonised The Screen, Merata Mita's son Hepi Mita's feature documentary; Taika Waititi's upcoming World War 2 drama.

Briar Grace-Smith^{zz} is a distinguished playwright who also writes prose and for television and is the only New Zealand woman to have written three produced feature-length scripts, all in the last six years. The first, *The Strength of Water*, premiered at the Rotterdam festival and the Berlinale and received the New Zealand Writers Guild Award for Best Script in 2010. Briar's been a development executive at the NZFC, teaches at the prestigious International

^{yy} <http://www.nzonscreen.com/person/chelsea-winstanley>

^{zz} <http://www.nzonscreen.com/person/briar-grace-smith>

Institute of Modern Letters and in 2012 directed her first short film, *Nine of Hearts*.

Libby Hakaraia^{aaa} has worked in broadcasting and media for the past twenty-five years as a producer and director of current affairs, factual documentary, arts and entertainment series, corporate promotional films and drama. She co-founded the Māoriland Film Festival^{bbb}, NZ's first international indigenous industry-focused film festival, has been a jury member at the world's largest indigenous film festival in Toronto. Two short films she produced were shown at the Berlinale where she also participated in forums. She has many projects in development and the Māoriland festival has just opened submissions for next year's edition.

Each of these women is powerful in her own right *and* because of the history and networks she's part of. For instance, whenever I see Briar mentioned, I remember her late mother, Miriam Smith, an award-winning writer of children's picture books, in te reo and in English; and think of her mother-in-law, Neustadt Prize-winner writer Patricia Grace.

From here, it feels as though Chelsea Winstanley has chosen to take up Merata Mita's leadership role, and that she has the implicit support of the others in the session, themselves also leaders. In doing so has she — and the other two — become Aotearoa New

^{aaa} <http://www.nzonscreen.com/person/libby-hakaraia/biography>

^{bbb} <http://www.maorilandfilm.co.nz/>

Zealand's Amma Asante^{ccc}, our Ava DuVernay^{ddd}, a woman filmmaker of high achievement who accomplishes many things while fearlessly speaking out about inequities? I think so. I love it.

The final tweet in that series ('Women experience things...that men can't') perhaps implies that Chelsea Winstanley was extending a 'sovereignty' argument to films by and about women. I hope so.

And during a *Women & Hollywood interview* last week Ainsley Gardiner, another *Waru* writer-director, advocated for a change of paradigm; this too is a first, the first time a woman filmmaker from AotearoaNZ has spoken publicly in such strong terms. First, she identifies many of the problems that webseries makers are resolving—

The issue is not a statistical one for me. We can see a rise in the numbers of women in various roles without seeing a shift in the processes that underpin the industry, script development, production approaches, marketing, and distribution.^{eee}

And when she was asked for her advice to other women directors, her response fitted with the idea of Building Our Own House (and doesn't preclude institutional change)—

Work together. Strive together. Fight together. This industry is not geared towards the way that women work naturally, which is collab-

^{ccc} <http://www.screendaily.com/news/asante-support-directors-beyond-first-film/5080522.article>

^{ddd} <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/director-ava-duvernay-talks-race-hollywood-doing-it-her-way-n439676>

^{eee} <https://womenandhollywood.com/tiff-2017-women-directors-meet-ainsley-gardiner-waru-d8c5edda8767/> 2025: link gone.

oratively, as a tribe. Share your work without fear. And support each other. Hire other women. Make it a priority.

We can't be successful as women by making it in a male-driven paradigm, we win when we change the paradigm.



Waru women at Big Screen Symposium 2016, with Ainsley Gardiner at far right

Lots of marginalised groups have run with the Building Our Own House concept in the past. For good reasons. Decades ago, feminist poet Adrienne Rich wrote about the benefits of working in ‘the realm where women are developing our own descriptions of the world’, so what she has to say is particularly apposite for women who tell onscreen stories—

In [working together, women] come to understand ... not only our unmet needs but the resources we can draw on for meeting them even in the face of female poverty, the hostility of institutions, the lack of documentation of our shared past ... Any woman who has moved from the playing fields of male discourse into the realm where women are developing our own descriptions of the world knows the extraordinary sense of shedding, as it were, the encumbrance of someone else's baggage, of ceasing to translate. It is not that the thinking becomes easy, but that the difficulties are

intrinsic to the work itself rather than to the environment. (*On Lies, Secrets and Silence*)

And in AotearoaNZ Building Our Own House(s) through women-led projects in general and webseries in particular is a practical response to the realities of the 'pipeline'. Bea Joblin (like Rose Goldthorp who, aged 19, is onto her fourth independent feature^{fff}) is an excellent example of a webseries and feature film maker who has insisted on building her own house, The Royal Combined Broadcasting Company of Aotearoa, because—

You don't have to deal with broadcasters, distributors and the kind of middle men who say "no, you can't make that kind of show"... It's basically taking the piss out of the notion that you have to be "official" or "legitimate" and get permission from these national organisations. Nobody gives me money and nobody gives me a slot, so I can do what I like.^{ggg}

Women Who Do It who, like Bea, prioritise their own agency don't — or rarely — participate in NZFC-funded programmes. So they're free from the battering claims that it's women's 'fault' when we don't participate. From enduring endless upskilling programmes. From the limited success of the NZFC's policy 'to identify and engage with women filmmakers'.

Here's a typical recent comment, from one gifted filmmaker; her experience probably reflects continuing unconscious bias in a system where an inadequate gender policy sustains the traditional advantage for men. It begs the question of whether 'identifying and engaging

^{fff} <https://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/95861649/fourth-feature-film-for-teenager-with-big-dreams>

^{ggg} <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/local-papers/upper-hutt-leader/10304605/Bea-shoots-her-own-brand-of-story>

with women filmmakers' leads to the advocacy that women filmmakers of AotearoaNZ need—

The NZFC have had me front up to them time and time again for career guidance. They meet with me, they say nice things, then they never call again. The young men ... get lots [more] attention.

Script assessment of screenplays that explore the female gaze and/or female protagonists is also an issue for women I've spoken with, a systemic demand that women 'translate' their screenplays into work that's systemically acceptable.

Script expert Linda Seger, in her classic *When Women Call the Shots*, describes what happens when a writer has to 'translate' to meet investors' demands, whether the investor is a state funder (in AotearoaNZ) or a purely commercial entity. The requirement to adapt her voice—

...often removes originality and authenticity... [The work] begins to look derivative, predictable, and all the same. It also limits the kinds of films that are made — another voice never emerges.

As Katie Wolfe put it on Radio New Zealand, yet another forthright statement from among the *Waru* women—

Often when you're submitting work which is very female-focused, sometimes the reaction to it is "that doesn't feel quite right" or "I don't recognise that". Of course you don't understand it, you've never heard it before. We're making the world care differently and

see differently, because we haven't had the chance to hear these stories before.^{hhh}

In addition to all these problems, men co-opt women's stories and the system supports them to do this. In a recent article, American director Maggie Greenwald urges everyone to acknowledge that women are probably the best tellers of our own stories.ⁱⁱⁱ And yes, co-option of our stories happens right here in AotearoaNZ! Between 2003–2017 there were ten features or telemovies about historical women and only two were written and directed by women.

As we undertake the essential task of developing 'our own descriptions of the world', Merata Mita's ideas about story sovereignty and representations of Māori, and Ava DuVernay's about representations of black people in film and TV, can easily be transposed to help understand what women bring to authentic portrayals of women and girls, of every race.

Merata often spoke out about issues of representation, although I haven't seen anything she wrote about representing women. For instance, she said this in conversation with Cushla Parekowhai—

Merata plucked at a wayward strand of late spring grass.

You know I find it tragic that Māori aren't left to make our own stories, ourselves. We just don't get a chance to address our own problems, our own personalities and our own ways of looking at life.

She rolled the long, lanky stalk between the palms of her hands.

^{hhh} <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetonoon/audio/201852433/waru-eight-wahine-bear-witness-to-child-abuse>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.talkhouse.com/white-males-not-stories-tell/>

Somehow Pākehā film makers feel free simply to take Māori characters and take Māori stories —

Merata bit into the stem and spat out the end.

Because Pākehā film makers take Māori character and stories out of a Māori context what they present is an interpretive or derivative view of our people rather than an authentic one. There is so much about the Pākehā Māori need to know but firstly Pākehā have to explain what this might be for themselves.^{jjj}

Ava DuVernay's language is slightly different but I think the meaning is the same. In one interview, she said—

When you have 50 to 60 years of representation that's prejudiced and very unnuanced in its view of race, it's refreshing to finally see a reflection instead of an interpretation ... I believe there's a special value in work that is a reflection of oneself as opposed to interpretation. When I see a film or a TV show about black people not written by someone who's black, it's an interpretation of that life. Historically, black artists have not been able to interpret black life as robustly as we should, in terms of having it distributed, financed and shared. That's why it's a beautiful moment when you have black artists who are able to articulate and express their reflection as opposed to black folk only being able to watch an interpretation of our life.^{kkk}

Webseries too offer women the opportunity to interpret our lives 'robustly' and with authenticity: Louise Hutt found that regardless of other reasons for making webseries, the women she interviewed did so because it offers them equal opportunities to make *and* share

^{jjj} <https://medium.com/women-filmmakers-interviews/k%C5%8Drero-ki-taku-tuakana-conversation-with-my-big-sister-d17c22fc3fe>

^{kkk} <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/features/oprah-winfrey-ava-duvernay-black-920196>

their work *and* to change perceptions of stories by and about women—

Several participants had turned to making their own webseries after dealing with sexism and harassment on set [which I haven't heard much about recently, but imagine they're much the same in AotearoaNZ as in Canada, as just reported by Sarah Polley]. Some also talked about the struggle to find mentors and models to base their own careers off; with the invisibility of women filmmakers brought up time and time again. Each participant talked about the importance of telling authentic stories — sharing their experiences and making and changing the way people think about what stories by, and about, women can be like.^{III}

THE SOCIAL ELEMENTS

Because 'having an effect on their audience or creating an audience' is vital for the participants in Louise's *Online Heroines* she identifies a 'social element' as integral to the work of webseries makers. This is multifaceted.

^{III} <https://medium.com/women-filmmakers-interviews/nz-update-9-louise-hutt-on-her-online-heroines-9308dd3745b2>; see also <https://medium.com/wellywood-woman-diary/women-are-not-the-problem-b737d8916ecb>

FB LIVE WITH THE BABY MAMAS



WEDS 12 OCTOBER 7:30PM(NZST)

GO TO: [FACEBOOK.COM/BABYMAMASCLUBSERIES](https://www.facebook.com/babymamasclubseries)

The social element includes interaction online, where fans provide valuable peer review and are a source of professional development. This helps change ‘the way people think about what stories by, and about, women can be like’ and makes complete sense to me, because I ‘read’ webseries in the same way as I read books, with viewing and re-viewing. webseries engage me and I love being able to participate in the conversations if I want to, below the episode, or on Twitter or Facebook. And I love the prolific behind-the-scenes clips and blogs that often allow me to share the process in depth. The social element can also help generate financial support. And it goes further. For instance, a couple of The Candle Wasters recently travelled across the world to meet with fans in Europe and the States.



Candle Wasters goes to New York

This is so different than the practice of feature filmmakers: they usually have dedicated producers, who often employ public relations specialists to promote the work; and their interactions tend to focus on media interviews and Q&As at film festivals or other key screenings, although most films also have some presence on social media. When Building Our Own House(s) through short-form series, other social elements are also significant, especially Women Who Do It's collaborations with one another and their responses to their other commitments.



Chelsie Preston Crayford and Gaylene Preston (photo: Pantograph Punch)

Building Our Own House(s) means creating our own communities. Creating women-led filmmaker groups isn't unique to AotearoaNZ, nor to the 21st century (have just been tracking down the films of

the Auckland Community Women's Video Inc, from the late 70s and early 80s); and it's blossomed with access to digital filmmaking as well as online distribution, so there are now many groups like the worldwide Film Fatales.^{mmm} But historically this hasn't happened often or consistently among women filmmakers.

In a moving conversation with her actor daughter Chelsie Preston Crayford (now unavailable) veteran filmmaker Gaylene Preston recently reflected on what the the lack of a gang meant for her—

It'd be nicer for me if I had a gang. And often women don't have gangs, because there's not enough of them to form a gang. So you join the other gangs. And the gangs in my case in film are men, who I seriously love. I've been lucky to have a working life where I've worked with some of the most talented, creative men in New Zealand, but when it comes down to it, they're not really my gang. So it's not the same.ⁿⁿⁿ

Now, largely thanks to Women Who Do It's engagement with webseries, we have gangs, collectives, teams and tribes. Men may be involved in some capacity but the projects are women-driven and usually have a high proportion of women in their crews.

I suspect that the group cultures vary depending on how they name themselves. For instance, I was intrigued by Ainsley Gardiner's comment in that *Women & Hollywood* interview, when she was asked about her favourite film. She referred to Allison Anders' *Gas, Food & Lodging* as a film that was significant for her but added — 'I don't have favorites though, that's not how my tribe rolls'.

That reminded me of another statement from Katie Wolfe, 'I myself need to make sure the women in the industry beside me are getting

^{mmm} <http://www.filmfatales.org/>

ⁿⁿⁿ <http://pantograph-punch.com/post/gaylene-preston-chelsie-preston-crayford>
2025: link gone.

a chance to tell their stories'; and of Tina Makereti's beautiful essay, 'Poutokomanawa — The Heartpost', where she outlines her vision for a kaupapa whare, a national house for literature—

...a whare that must welcome and absorb and connect all the literatures and writers and readers of Aotearoa. It is a whare for all of us.⁰⁰⁰

And it seems to me that all three of these Māori women start not from the place of competition that characterises the film industry, but from a place of inclusivity, so even when building their own houses, for any art form, they'll hold a vision for a larger, national, house that embraces everyone. And that is a very beautiful starting place.



Pot Luck DOP Pikihiua Haenga, & 1st AC Brendon Moananui

Five years ago, Anne Thompson of *Indiewire* noticed that in America filmmakers like Lynn Shelton were thriving in a new collaborative, barter indie economy where actor/writer/director/producers share roles—

All these filmmakers are sort of roaming the country helping each other make films in all these different locations and all these

⁰⁰⁰ <https://medium.com/spiral-collectives/poutokomanawa-the-heartpost-1d643dc8376>

different ranges of experiences and it works. Women are really good at that kind of thing,' Lynn Shelton had explained that she could just— '...pick up a camera, and call [my] friends and say, "let's go make a movie!" And if we fail, like, we'll just shove it under the rug.^{PPP}

That 'let's go make a movie...and if we fail, like, we'll just shove it under the rug' is, I think, a starting point for many women who make webseries. And the presence of so many Women Who Do It here who produce excellent work highlights the reality that 'Women are really good at that kind of thing'.

The most recent and public manifestation of 'being really good at that kind of thing' is *Waru's* absolutely consistent solidarity in every appearance they've made, from their powerful session at the Big Screen Symposium a year ago to their recent appearance at the Toronto International Film Festival and their repeated references to their mutual support throughout the process, building on the strengths of individuals in the group for the benefit of all.^{qqq}

It isn't always easy though, as Adrienne Rich understood. Ainsley Gardiner again—

The biggest challenge was the process. While each of us told our own story we worked more strongly when we came together to make decisions for the good of the whole film. When, because of time or budget or something else, we weren't able to make decisions together, it felt very isolating. Being a director can open you up to

PPP <http://www.indiewire.com/2012/07/are-women-directors-entering-a-golden-age-studio-360-talks-to-shelton-polley-240347/>

qqq <https://www.mixcloud.com/ScriptToScreen/waru-breaking-the-silence/> (Big Screen Symposium)

vulnerability, dealing with such personal stories, and such a huge theme as child abuse in our community. It worked best when we honored the collaboration and celebrated the collective nature of the filmmaking.

I've often heard that, within these collective frameworks, care for each individual is prioritised, regardless of her role in the production. For instance, The Candlewasters believe that it's really important to have a good work environment and want to hear when issues arise for cast and crew. They've learned that people find it easier to tell them about other people's problems than about their own, so there's now someone available for people to talk to even when the collective is 'incredibly busy', without feeling they're 'bothering' anyone. The nominated person will ensure that the message gets through and will be responded to.¹¹¹

Another aspect of the social element is flexibility for typically time-poor women. Production of short-form series doesn't have to be in 6-day-a-week blocks with 12–16 hour days. Without sacrificing quality it can happen bit-by-bit at times that fit around other commitments, in particular commitments associated with making a living and caring for others. As one webseries maker said to me— 'I would be horrified if my sets were not family-friendly for cast and crew.' I believe that this 'family-friendly' factor is a key motivation for many Women Who Do It.

In the past and probably still, women directors of feature films often didn't and don't have the family-friendly choice and that left and leaves them with difficult choices and painful consequences. In her conversation with Chelsie, Gaylene Preston reflected on her experience—

¹¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Gkr3dBGFoo> from about 5:50.

... when we talk about childcare, you immediately think about young children. But actually, when it came to *Perfect Strangers*, you were 15. Tui [Gaylene's mother] was living with us. She was 85. So you were 15 and Tui was 85 and I — the person who was really managing the welfare of both of you — I went to the South Island, and I couldn't leave the South Island for insurance reasons. So once I went there, I had to stay there. And that meant I was there for three-and-a-half months ... And that meant, like, who was looking after who? With a 15-year-old and an 85-year-old. Who was looking after who? That was the hard thing for me. How to be your mum, and how to be a good daughter during *Perfect Strangers*. And that was a really hard choice ... But I had to make a decision, and I thought, right: For those 8–10 weeks while we were shooting, the film has to come first. And Chelsie comes a very close second. Which means I can't be a good daughter. I can't do the three. I can do two. I can't do three. And during that time, things went really quite bad for Tui. That was really hard.



Katie Wolfe on set with *Waru*

This is so different from the choices of the women who made *Waru*, and, I suspect, of women who make webseries and have children. Katie Wolfe again, on including children—

The women of *Waru*, the nine of us, we have 17 children between us. We never had any limitations on bringing those children onto

set... There's a lot of attitude changes that have to go into the industry.

The Māoriland Film Festival — where this year women directed 62% of its films — is unequivocal about the centrality of the well-being of families, too. During a little Twitter conversation with Māoriland they wrote

You don't get screaming babies in films when you include mothers and their children in your filmmaking community. You DO get stronger work...it's really simple. You want women in the industry? Support the people around them and they'll be greater supported... It takes a community to make a film and the wellbeing of your crew is impacted by the wellbeing of their families.

Finally, Ainsley Gardiner's statement that women will win when 'we change the paradigm' gives me hope, because her 'we' seems to include all of us, women, men, consumers of screen stories, the agencies that distribute funding from the taxpayer, the wider screen industry. It gives me hope because, as I hope I've shown, the Women Who Do It, on *Waru* and in *Melodrama* and in the webseries have already changed the paradigm. The rest of us just need to catch up.

So I'll end with Ainsley's wisdom from the front line—

Best advice bar none: feed them well. Merata Mita ... told me that filmmaking is a privilege afforded to very few. That privilege is a huge responsibility. Don't be an asshole.

Take care of each other and for God's sake feed people properly. We have to embrace what comes naturally to us. We are fierce nurturers and protectors of what is right. We can handle incredible pressure and pain. We can fight among ourselves, recover, make decisions

that serve the community, and we can do so without losing anything for ourselves.

We would be well served to fund the experimentation of alternative ways of making films that are driven by women. It's pointless just bringing women in to sit at the king's table. We have far more to offer, and, of course, we're also the greatest consumers of our own stories.

The status quo is fearful.

It should be.^{sss}

Let's hope that the status quo agencies face down their fear and emulate the courage and imagination of all the Women Who Do It, through whole-heartedly appreciating them, through learning from them and through suffusing their pipelines with gender equity principles. And let's hope that inspires the wider industry to support gender equality too.

In part 2 of this post, I discuss some specific gender equity weaknesses in the NZFC and NZOA pipelines, and offer some suggestions about how they might be addressed, with particular reference to Anna Serner's work at the Swedish Film Institute.^{ttt}

First published in *Wellywoodwoman* and @devt on Medium, 17 September 2017.

^{sss} In 2024, Ainsley was appointed Head of Funding at the New Zealand Film Commission <https://www.nzfilm.co.nz/news/nzfc-announces-new-head-funding>

^{ttt} <https://medium.com/women-s-film-activists/nz-update-11-2-gender-equity-in-practice-3b1440a522c9>

#DIRECTEDBYWOMEN #AOTEAROA – INTENTIONS



Kete– *Kura Walker née Rua* Photograph– *Arekahānara* Design– *Ź*
Terre Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa!

To celebrate #Suffrage125 in Aotearoa New Zealand this year — 125 years since women got the vote — I’m creating a series of pop-up events to celebrate and learn from women who direct for cinema, television and web series and commercials. With lots of lovely help. Old and new work, from Aotearoa and from overseas, with Q&As, debates and panels to learn more about women directors and the ways they approach screen story telling.

#DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa is inspired by Barbara Ann

O'Leary's beautiful and global project #DirectedByWomen^a, an annual all-September party, now in its fourth year, but it will run until at least November 2018, the month when women here first voted.

The first #DirectedByWomen pop-up was at Mokopōpaki's shop window cinema in Auckland, where it was warmly welcomed, with the tiny space (perfect for two!) sometimes overflowing with viewers.^b



The main programme takes place in the Suffrage months of October–November, in Auckland and Wellington.

#DirectedByWomen becomes more and more vital, as a celebratory event that reaches beyond ‘the industry’, to audiences for films that women write and direct. It provides a fine range of options for people who are looking for diverse films by women.

There are two main reasons for my involvement this year, with a pilot program of screenings accompanied by discussion with directors.

The first is that there is a huge increase in wide releases of films about women that are written and directed by men. This matters. As one woman told me recently —

^a <http://directedbywomen.com/>

^b <https://medium.com/spiral-collectives/directedbywomen-in-mokop%C5%8D-pakis-shop-front-cinema-e778ad26babo>

Men are not experts on women. They observe women. Sometimes, because they are human, they have beautiful women characters. It is different, no less interesting. But it is still a male gaze. When I tell a story about women I'm an expert because I am a woman.

The second is that I've talked with so many women in various contexts, lots of them feminists, who choose their reading matter according to the gender of the author. But very few can name a woman director beyond Jane Campion or someone similar, they do not have a favorite woman director and they do not select their viewing with reference to the director's or screenwriter's gender.

I hope, that if they/we are exposed to more women-directed work PLUS conversations about it and how it was made, including the additional challenges women directors have, preferably conversations between each woman director herself speaking with another woman director, more women will start looking at who directed the movies they're offered in cinemas and online and take note of their differences.

Some of this work will be just like the men's work we're used to. But a lot won't. In the UK Club Des Femmes does great work with this and there are women's film festivals. But there's room for a lot more activity and #DirectedByWomen offers a wider and global opportunity and for a whole month.

Finally, #DirectedByWomen provides a principled, welcoming, network and context for more isolated activity like mine to link into, with an agenda geared to the conditions in #Aotearoa New Zealand. And I'm so so grateful for that.



First published in *Wellywoodwoman* and @devt on *Medium*, 10-11 April 2018.

GETTING WITH THE SUFFRAGE125 PROGRAMME



125 years ago today, women in Aotearoa New Zealand got the vote. And my mate's in town, for a posh Suffrage125 dinner. Writing Buddy 1B. You might remember her, from our conversation a couple of years back.^a

Play with me, she begs, from the airport. He rā mīharo tēnei. We can garden. I'll shout you lunch. You can help me pick a dinner-time frock.

^a 'Women are not the problem' <https://medium.com/wellywood-woman-diary/women-are-not-the-problem-b737d8916ecb>; and in 2019, 'Tū tonu mai' <https://medium.com/wellywood-woman-diary/t%C5%AB-tonu-mai-2dcebecd1c77>

I can't, I say. Gotta write about the #DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa screening programme.

Do it tomorrow, she says. Celebrate with me...

I can't, I say again. It's the first screening tonight. *The Bookshop*, and Isabel Coixet is beaming in, live from Barcelona, for a Q&A.



Isabel Coixet on *The Bookshop* set, with Bill Nighy and Patricia Clarkson

I think it's the first screening in this country that's followed by a live Skype with the film's director. I'm nervous as.

1B — So? Haven't you prepared?

ME — Of course I have. And people have given me some lovely questions. But I haven't had time to write about it all before it starts.

1B — It 'all'?

ME — The screenings. The ideas behind them.

Ah, she says. She gets it.

1B — How can I help?

ME — Write it for me?

I can't, she says. But I **can** bring stuff for lunch. Throw you the pātai. You know the story. I'll hum it with the questions and you play it with the answers.

So she arrives — as always — with (reusable) bags bulging with kai. Opens the fridge. Mutters about its miserable contents. Unloads her bags. Makes a pot of tea.

Settles herself in a sunny chair. Switches off her phone. Hums. Watches me power up the desktop.

One two three go, she says. What's on the programme?

Early lunch, I say. I've seen those scallops. The cake box.

1B rolls her eyes.

1B— Lunch is **not** your kaupapa.

I refocus. Fast.

ME — There are seven screenings, accompanied by discussions with directors. A pilot programme. Hang on, I'll paste it in.

She puts down her mug, gets up, puts on her elegant reading specs.

I'm easily distracted. I want to be distracted. They're new, I say. Nice.

She ignores me. Comes over. Leans on my shoulder. I staunch up. Paste in the info.



still from The Bookshop

WELLINGTON

THE BOOKSHOP Wednesday September 19 7pm

Followed by a live Skype discussion/Q & A with writer/director **Isabel Coixet** (9pm)

Te Auaha cinema (just up Dixon Street from Cuba Mall) Free.



Isabel

EVEN DOGS ARE GIVEN BONES (dir Kanya Stewart 1982) & **MINIMUM** (dir Kathleen Winter 2018) **Friday September 21 7.30pm**

Introduced by the directors with a brief Q & A at the end.

Beehive Theatre, Parliament, kindly hosted by Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, Grant Robertson. Free. Guest list now closed.



Even Dogs Are Given Bones (EDAGB) documents a group of women workers during their 11-week occupation of the Rixen clothing factory in Levin, after its owner made them redundant and closed the factory without giving them redundancy payments.



Minimum is a series about women who work low-wage, precarious or under-appreciated jobs in Aotearoa.

RADIOGRAM Wednesday October 3 6pm



Followed by a Q & A with director Rouzie Hassanova.

Te Auaha cinema [CLICK HERE](#) to reserve a seat.

. . .

Sunday 28 October 3pm Rafiki

Followed by a discussion with director **Wanuri Kahiu**, led by Ness Simons, writer/director of the hugely successful *Pot Luck* webseries and head tutor at the New Zealand Film and Television School.

Te Auaha cinema Dixon Street [CLICK HERE](#) to reserve a ticket.



Monday 29 October 6pm Rafiki

with **Wanuri** present and followed by a discussion with Wanuri, led by Kiritapu Allan, M.P. and Junior Whip.

Beehive Theatrette, New Zealand Parliament, Pipitea, hosted by Jan Logie with Grant Robertson as guest.

Free. Invitation only, but feel free to ask for an invitation!

ŌTAKI

Tuesday 30 October 6pm Rafiki, with **Wanuri** as guest.

Māoriland Hub, 68 Main Street Ōtaki [CLICK HERE](#) to book a seat, or buy one at the door (\$6)

AUCKLAND

WOMEN & WEBSERIES

Wednesday 24 October 6pm

WOMEN & WEBSERIES

Aroha Bridge
(co)dir. Jessica Hansell

Baby Mama's Club
dir. Hanelle Harris

Friday Night Sites
dir. Roseanne Liang

Happy Playland
dir. Sally Bollinger

Pot Luck
dir. Ness Simons

PSUSY
dir. Anna Duckworth &
Jaya Beach-Robertson

Tragicomic
dir. Elsie & Sally Bollinger

selected episodes & discussion
hosted by Louise Hutt, dir. of Online Heroines

tickets from rialto.co.nz/cinema/newmarket



design Louise Hutt

#DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa's response to Wanuri's FUN & FIERCE & FANTASTICAL Afrobubblegum ideas,^b directed by **Anna Duckworth, Hanelle Harris, Jaya Beach-Robertson, Jessica Hansell, Ness Simons, Roseanne Liang and Elsie & Sally Bollinger.**

^b https://www.ted.com/talks/wanuri_kahiu_fun_fierce_and_fantastical_african_art?language=en

Conversation with some of the directors to follow, led by Louise Hutt, herself a writer/director, and author of the ground-breaking *Online Heroines* research.^c

Rialto Cinema Newmarket, [CLICK HERE](#).

Rafiki

Thursday 26 October 6pm



Followed by discussion with director **Wanuri Kahiu** and Dr **Ella Henry**, who teaches in the Faculty of Maori Indigenous Development at Auckland University of Technology. She teaches Maori Media, and researches in the fields of Maori business, development,

^c Louise explains here: <https://medium.com/women-filmmakers-interviews/nz-update-9-louise-hutt-on-her-online-heroines-9308dd3745b2> More, on Youtube, here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_XGhsLoDAo

culture and sovereignty. Ella has also been involved in the evolution of the Maori screen industry.

Rialto Cinema Newmarket, to book [CLICK HERE](#).

1B is suitably impressed.

1B — I see.

She gives me a little one-arm hug.

1B — Ākene pea. Ka rawe. But.

ME — What?

1B — Why?

I summon a justification.

ME — I want to celebrate these directors, within the Directed By Women global celebration that reaches beyond 'the industry', to audiences for films that women write and direct, *and* within Suffrage125.

I want to amplify the audiences' pleasure by having the directors present to talk about their work, in the cinema in person or through the magic of live Skype.

And I want to provide a craft-oriented and feminist context, where — if they want to — directors can talk about why and how they made the work **and** how systemic obstacles affected the film; and what that meant for the film.

It's kind of urgent. Because there's a huge increase in wide releases of films about women that are written and directed by men.^d This matters. As Swiss director Delphine Lehericcy told me recently —

Men are not experts on women. They observe women. Sometimes, because they are human, they have beautiful women characters. It is different, no less interesting. But it is still a male gaze. When I tell a story about women I'm an expert because I am a woman.^e

And I've talked with so many women in various contexts, lots of them feminists, who choose their reading matter according to the gender of the author, but often cannot name a woman director beyond Jane Campion or someone similar and certainly do not have a favorite woman director. I hope, that if they/we are exposed to more women-directed work PLUS director-led conversations about it, more women will start looking at who directed the movies they're offered in cinemas and online and take note of their differences.

Some of the work will be just like the men's work we're used to. But a lot won't. In the UK, Club Des Femmes is a good model for celebrating women-directed movies. There are many women's film festivals too. But there's room for a lot more activity.

1B — So #DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa is a fragmented kind of film festival?

ME — Yes, and mostly in pop-up contexts, to make the work accessible to those who can't afford film festivals: students and emerging filmmakers and others on low incomes.

1B — But the Rialto screenings will be at normal prices?

^d <https://medium.com/women-s-film-activists/nz-update-16-suffrage-125-the-nzfc-125-fund-15d58bc341dc>

^e <https://rm.coe.int/interview-delphine-lehericcy/16808d6477>

ME — Yes, alas. I hoped to organise subsidised tickets, as Ava DuVernay and Oprah Winfrey and others do in the States. But ran out of energy and time.

1B goes back to her sunny chair and her tea.

1B — How did you choose the films?

ME — I thought about films that would provoke discussion and possibly action. Films directed by women whose work and presence in the world delight me. Who might inspire women to pay attention to and watch and celebrate women directors right through every year.

Isabel Coixet was a no-brainer, as a prolific Catalan/Spanish writer & director and often her own camera operator. Her work includes award-winning features, documentaries and commercials and her personal work has complex women protagonists and often incorporates human rights themes. She was a good friend of John Berger, the legend whose writing revolutionised ideas about looking at and portraying women.

She's also now in post-production on *Elisa y Marcela*, for Netflix, about two women who attempt to marry at the beginning of the twentieth century; and is a member of Spain's powerful group of activist women directors and president of the influential European Women's Audiovisual Network. She has stories to tell and wisdom to share.

The Bookshop is about women and work and the problems we face, so is a great choice in the week that *Even Dogs Are Given Bones* and *Minimum* will show at Parliament. And the actions of a young girl in *The Bookshop* point to hope for the future, the kind that I feel thanks to the work of filmmakers like Kathleen Winter who directed *Minimum* and her DOP, Jess Charlton.

Rouzie Hassanova's *Radiogram* is here thanks to Lucy Holyoake from the Emerging Women Filmmakers Network,^f who told me about Rouzie and her film. A tiny group of us watched it and were blown away. It is so beautiful. And timely, with its theme of freedom — a theme shared in all the work selected — including freedom of expression.

And then those webseries. Aotearoa's women directors thrive online. *Women & Webseries* celebrates their work, with a fierce (I know I'm repeating myself!), often funny and feminist selection. What's not to love?

I loved Wanuri's FUN & FIERCE (yes!) & FANTASTICAL Afrobubblegum ideas!^g She's inspiring. *Rafiki* is totally special and its journey into the world is fascinating. I think there are also parallels between what colonisation and Christianity did to gender and sexuality in Kenya and what they did here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

iB — I'm in.

I like it when she smiles at me. I smile back.

iB — Are there really many women who have disposable incomes and choose to buy books by women authors, but who don't choose movies and small screen viewing that women direct?

ME — Oh yes. Lots. I became aware of some of them in a gender symposium a while back. But they're also you and me. None of us has been exposed to a critical mass of women-directed screen work unless, like Barbara Ann O'Leary of *Directed By Women*, we've made a conscious choice to watch only or primarily work that women direct.

^f <https://medium.com/women-s-film-activists/emerging-women-filmmakers-network-4d4b09566535>

^g [https://www.ted.com/talks/wanuri_kahiu_fun_fierce_and_fantastical_african_art?](https://www.ted.com/talks/wanuri_kahiu_fun_fierce_and_fantastical_african_art?language=en)
language=en

So we miss out. For instance, Delphine also told me that her feminist ideas and their realisation in her work were shaped by reading women's books; and that after reading Virginia Woolf etc she was unable to read men like Balzac and Proust in the same way. But all her filmmaking influences were men, until she came across Andrea Arnold's work; and Celine Sciamma's.

1B — Do women's experiences of filmmaking matter? Isn't it hard for every filmmaker, regardless of gender? Doesn't the work just speak for itself?

ME — Yes and No. You're pushing me, babe.

There's real pleasure when we watch diverse women's authentic portrayals of women and girls on screens large and small; and their stories about the lives of men and boys. You know that. And *EDAGB*, *Minimum*, *The Bookshop*, *Radiogram*, *Rafiki* and the webseries episodes all demonstrate how fresh and different and inspiring and deeply moving that experience can be.

But you also know that women have particular problems within systems that show minimal confidence in our self-representations and our world views and the stories we choose to tell; where 'they' (sometimes other women) try to mould our stories so they fit what they're used to, where 'they' decline to invest in them. Where 'they' try to persuade us, persistently, that it's our fault: we just need more confidence and a few more workshops to bring us up to speed. We've talked about this before, in 'Women Are Not The Problem'.^h Does anyone say to an aspiring sports player, 'You need more confidence'? Sometimes, maybe, but mostly what they say is 'Practise. Practise. Practise'. And they make sure the sports player gets the individualised support she needs. There may be workshops involved and coaching, all kinds of stuff, but basically it's about supporting

^h <https://medium.com/wellywood-woman-diary/women-are-not-the-problem-b737d8916ecb>

the player to do what she needs to do to shine as a unique player and in a team if it's a team sport.

1B — But I just watched Jacinda Ardern and Helen Clark talking about confidence as a problem, even for Auntie Helen?

ME — Yes. I saw that too. They also spoke at length about domestic violence as a major problem and about equal pay. It surprised me that they didn't really connect women's felt 'lack of confidence' to our lived experiences of systemic gender discrimination and expectations.

I often think of a screenwriter who responded to some research I did, because she **was** like a highly motivated tennis player.ⁱ She wrote

What keeps me going is an inner drive to never just be normal that I've always had. It is unbearable for me to think about a life where I wasn't working towards something more creatively. It is not about fame or fortune, it is about getting to the point where I know I am an expert at my craft...Time is my biggest issue, because I need to work 40 hours a week at a job that isn't screenwriting to pay my rent and put food in the cat's bowl and so on. This means I work very long days sometimes in order to cram in my day job, and some screenwriting, and meetings for other projects. But, as I said above, it is not an option for me to **not** do these things, and that's fine by me.

This woman is now an established professional screenwriter and continues to work on her own projects too. Because of her inner drive, her fervent desire to tell onscreen stories and her commitment to become an expert at doing that. Not because of her confidence or because she attended lots of workshops intended to

ⁱ <https://wellywoodwoman.blogspot.com/2014/06/disappointment-gratitude-call-for-help.html>

'upskill' her. Finding time and resources were her biggest issues, as they've been for artists forever. And like many other women, her early career needs for time and resources will have been affected by pay inequity and/or (though not for her, I think) by the effects of our unpaid work on our capacity to practise.

Or there's legendary editor Annie Collins. She's driven, too. She's said—

There's something about the images that just drives me all the time. About putting them together, about that moment of connection between one shot and another, about what happens that comes out of it. It isn't just this shot and then that shot, it's what happens at that moment of intersection. It can be magical. And I would say that ever since 1975 when I first cut anything, it's like an addict, you're always searching for that same high. And all the time I'm searching in the footage no matter whether it's drama or documentary, but it happens more often in documentary, I'm searching for those moments of magic that happen. And there's nothing like it. I've tried to go away from editing but I can't. It's so magical. Every film is magical.^j

I'm sure that the systemic lack of confidence in us — NOT our own confidence or lack of it, though we have every reason to lack confidence when we enter systems that are biased against us — is a key element in the deep-seated gender discrimination that causes so many problems, like those highlighted in #metoo. Isabel's said that to get a start in the film industry as a woman in Spain, you have 'to be a thousand times more pushy, tough and determined than any man'. *Rafiki*'s been banned in Kenya because of its story about two young women who fall in love and Wanuri now has to take action against the Kenyan government if the film — which was selected for

^j <https://medium.com/spiral-collectives/annie-collins-editor-extraordinaire-e631bfic26c8>

Cannes and Toronto — can be eligible for consideration for Best Foreign Language film at the Oscars.

The systemic lack of confidence and investment in our work, from development to distribution to the archives,^k has so many effects and it actively sabotages opportunities to see women's work. For example, I've often wondered if, when film fests talk about 'quality' and women's films, they're partly talking about production values that are only possible with big budgets. I wish they focused more on the quality and imagination of the storytelling by diverse women who are the experts on our lives. And they might, now some of them have signed up to run their festivals with gender parity. I didn't notice that *Radiogram* was a low-budget film, because I was transfixed by its power and beauty: you'll love it for the script alone. But Rouzie had to shoot *Radiogram* for 130,000EUR plus 35,000EUR for music rights; some of the production values affected by the limited budget will have reduced her opportunities.

Webseries women directors too show such quality and imagination in storytelling, using small budgets and big imaginations to represent women in ways we just don't see otherwise in the cinema. So I was very interested when someone at New Zealand on Air didn't get this and was mystified why episodes of local webseries might provide a 'cinema experience'.

1B — You're upset, kare.

ME — I am. I loved what writer/director Cathasaigh Ó Fiannachta wrote in a FB post encouraging friends to support a fundraiser for a short film — her first feature, *Hang Time*, is out later this year and made on a low-budget model, so she knows what she's talking about, but I also felt sad, yet again, because the problem is so persistent —

^k <https://medium.com/women-s-film-activists/auckland-womens-community-video-2beebdf6da09>

Many young female filmmakers get stuck at the emerging level due to a lack of consistent funding. Lower budgets mean lower production value. Unfortunately many producers/financiers/audiences associate low production value with a lack of talent... and the cycle of funding imbalance continues to keep incredible talent from reaching their true potential. The best way for Wellington to change this global funding imbalance is to directly support the female filmmaking community through events like this. These baby filmmakers aren't our competition, they are in our care.

(I'm sick of this conversation. I want to get outside. Now.)

ME — Lunch soon?

1B shrugs. Shakes her head.

1B — Kāore.

I sigh. Twice.

1B — No violins, Eeyore. Is there some good news?

ME — Let me think.

(I'm hungry. I take a risk.)

We could have just a little something? I ask. Something from that cake box and some kawakawa tea from the garden?

I hold my breath, watch her realise that 'a little something' would be good for both of us.

1B- Āe. Ka rawe.

So we potter round the garden picking bits of this and that, for now and for lunch. Eat special little chocolate and raspberry friands from the French Cancan bakery in Newtown.

And I'm good to go again.

Briefly.

iB settles back in her chair, trying to be patient. She still has to buy something to wear at her posh dinner. It will take her ages.

iB — And we're off!

ME — The good news. At the annual Big Screen Symposium three years ago Chelsea Winstanley called on the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) to distribute its funds equally between women and men, the first woman director/producer/writer to do so, supported by other Māori women filmmakers.¹ Remember? Since then, others have joined her. That call hasn't ended. And there's been #metoo, followed by the excellent work of SWAG — the Screen Women's Action Group, working to make our industry safe from sexual harassment.^m

And I'm delighted that Anna Serner of the Swedish Film Institute is coming to this year's Big Screen Symposium; she's the world leader in creating gender equity in taxpayer-funded film organisations. Change is happening.

But it's slow. And it's focused within the industry. And as I said earlier, this #DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa is a pilot project to develop more awareness and demand among audiences. And to work out how to get women's films more widely seen. I'd love distributors and cinemas to start using the A-rating or F-Rated logos, now well-established overseas, to signal when their films are directed by women. But in the meantime...

iB — Why can't you just do what you're doing now, on a larger scale?

I laugh. And talk as fast as I can, while my fingers fly across the keyboard.

¹ <https://medium.com/womens-film-activism/merata-is-always-with-us-f954eb-d5f4e>; <https://wellywoodwoman.blogspot.com/2015/10/merata-is-always-with-us.html>

^m <https://www.facebook.com/screenwomensactiongroup/>

ME — **Cost** Including cost of time. Lots and lots of searching to find *EDAGB* for instance. And So Many Emails About Everything... And so much Generous Voluntary Help from others that is unsustainable given their busy lives. Director and writer and academic and artist and activist Louise Hutt has been amazing. Writer/director Ness Simons at Te Auaha has been amazing too, though she's also flat out as head tutor at the New Zealand Film School, doing outstanding work to support her students to become the best human beings they can be, as well as the best filmmakers they can be; the women and men who've been through that course are special. Kathryn Bennett at Rialto Newmarket has been uber-generous too, patiently explaining how the system works. Jill McNab at Vendetta has provided excellent advice. Patricia Watson at WIFTNZ is a gem. The New Zealand Film Commission kindly helped with a contact and opened up their beautiful little Hayward Theatre for a test screening. The women at Big Screen Symposium have really gone for it to get Wanuri here.

Screening Rights Screening rights cost is impossible to recoup if tickets are to be affordable and if the cinema (like Te Auaha) is small. And Te Auaha's lovely 55-seat cinema is essential because most cinemas can't yet manage live Skype and because its size is just right for intimate conversations. The costs for films not otherwise distributed in New Zealand and for one or several screenings, even in a larger cinema, are particularly uneconomic; and not always negotiable.

Labelling/ Classification Getting films labelled through the Film and Video Licensing Board (FVLB) — or in the case of the webseries episodes, each episode [I've since found out that the FVLB doesn't charge to label local work]! That labelling isn't necessary for docos and the FVLB — though very helpful in every way possible — appears not (yet!) to be interested in the argument that almost every woman-directed film **is** a doco, because it shows us

women as we are, rather than as we are constructed through lenses controlled by men.

Freight Who'd have thought it would take a full day to organise a FedEx pickup from Korea, for the DCP (Digital Cinema Package) of *Rafiki*?

And then there's **File Conversion**: all those webseries eps had to be made into a single file and then converted to a DCP. Fortunately there's now free software that does it. But still Louise's generous time to make the title cards, there's an editor to pay and a 1TB hard-drive to buy...

Travel Costs for directors and fees for them to speak or to interview other directors, which I haven't paid this time but which they utterly deserve.

Media Mostly just time (and I struggle with finding that time and with responding to requests when something draws media attention, as with finding the Rixen women who star in *EDAGB*, hereⁿ and here^o). But there are also fliers and posters and social media....

1B — You could get funding? From the NZFC? NZOA? WIFT? This time, Women's Suffrage? From human rights lawyers interested in freedom of expression, especially for *Rafiki* and *Radiogram*?

ME — Tried all that. No success. Maybe another year. I've been asking directors and writers and editors and cinematographers which films they would like to see with the opportunity to do a Q&A with one of the filmmakers after it screens. And the list is already quite long and very exciting.

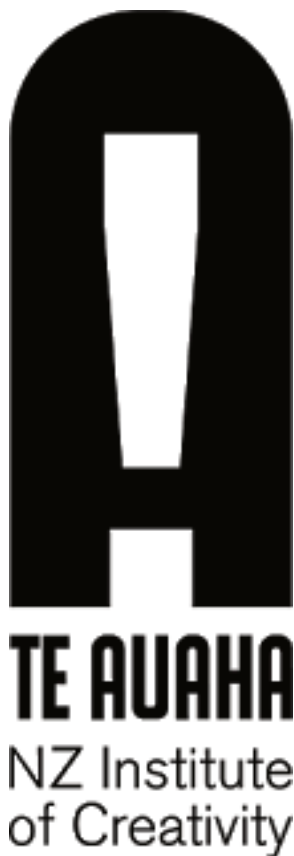
ⁿ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/106656081/search-on-for-women-who-made-employment-history-in-levin>

^o <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/106718997/the-women-who-stood-their-ground-in-levin-factory-found>

In the meantime, I'm just hugely grateful to all those who helped and continue to help. What a lovely combo of logos, huh?







1B — Āe. He tika tonu! And how about that *Magic Fridge*?^p You could do with one of those...

ME — Today I have one! As well as the book. Which I should use more. Kia ora e hoa. Ngā mihi nui, ngā mihi tino mahana ki a koe. I'm done. Let's have lunch.

So we do.

And we plant some silver beet.

^p <http://www.viva.co.nz/article/food-drink/magic-fridge-author-alex-mackay/>

Then off we go to find 1B the perfect frock. My head preoccupied with those questions for Isabel.

NOTE Of all feature films produced in Aotearoa between 2003–2016, around 80% were directed by men; and of taxpayer-funded features during this period, only 6.5% were written and directed by women and had female protagonists. Women participate more fully in documentary-making; in the last three years, the proportion of NZOA-funded documentaries directed by women fluctuated between 36–46%, though how many of these were about women and girls is unmeasured. Distribution of films that diverse women make is a further, global, problem.

First published in *Wellywoodwoman* and @devt on *Medium*, 18 September 2018.

MOKOPŌPAKI'S SHOP WINDOW CINEMA



Mokopōpaki's shop window cinema, from the footpath at 454
Karangahape Road Auckland

Mokopōpaki's shop window cinema is small and perfect for two; but I've seen seven or eight people crammed in there.^a

Inside, there's magic— #DirectedByWomen short films, videos and wild footage dating from the 70s to the 90s, with a very special three minutes from 2005. All on an approximately 4-hour loop. But with a menu: if you visit for something special, you can choose it.

The (totally free!) films will run until 14 April, during Mokopōpaki's opening hours:

Wednesday-Friday 11-5

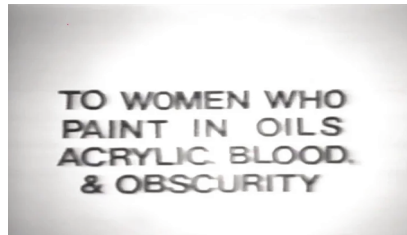
Saturday 11-4

What's available to watch?

Auckland Women's Community Video^b

Heather McPherson interview and reading, Women's Gallery, 1980

'Tidied up' by Annie Mein



Title card for one of Heather's poems

J.C. Sturm interview, Women's Gallery, 1980

(Divided from next item and 'tidied up' by Annie Mein)

^a Mokopōpaki is no longer a venue, but continues with exhibitions in other spaces, and with publications.

^b <https://medium.com/spiral-collectives/auckland-womens-community-video-2beebdf6da09>

J.C. Sturm reads *One Thousand and One Nights*, Women's Gallery, 1980

(Divided from previous item and 'tidied up' by Annie Mein)

Keri Hulme reads 'King Bait', Women's Gallery story evening, 1980

'Tidied up' by Annie Mein

Wild and sometimes silent footage, Women's Gallery *Opening Show*, 1980

Bobbie Carroll Sharon [Alston]'s Breakfast Bayou Cafe, nd

Gaylene Preston *How I Threw Art Out the Window*, 1981

Joanna Margaret Paul

Roses, 1975

Sisterhood, 1975

John Irwin interview with Juanita Ketchel re her *Getting Free* oral history project, nd

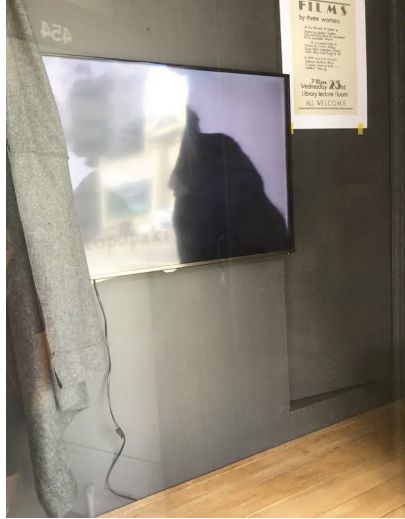
Peter Burger & Pirimia Burger [*the bone people* and Irihapeti Ramsden, Keri Hulme, Miriama Evans & Marian Evans], 2005

Unknown [Wilds of] Lesbian Ball, 1992

Unknown Sharon [Alston]'s *Anniversary 11 February 1996*, Art Retrospective, 1996.

We thank the Alexander Turnbull Library, The Estate of Joanna Margaret Paul, Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington and CIRCUIT Artist Film and Video Aotearoa; Gaylene Preston; Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision, for preserving these films and videos and making them available to screen in association with *This Joyous, Chaotic Place*:

He Waiata Tangi-ā-Tabu.^c And big kia ora! to Annie Mein, who worked very hard to put it together, with Mokopōpaki.



Looking into the cinema's side window on your way through the gallery door. That's Keri Hulme onscreen, reading at the Women's Gallery 1980

If you want to do the full four-hour marathon watch, it's easy to take a pleasant break or two. For a chat about the work with Mokopōpaki's Jacob, who might offer you a cuppa. Or you can pop next door-but-one for one of the best sandwiches in the world, at Divine Morsels, with some peaceful tables to linger at.^d

Or you can take an ice-cream break, at the dairy across the road.

^c <https://medium.com/spiral-collectives/coming-soon-this-joyous-chaotic-place-d4doc7ffe7b1>

^d <https://www.facebook.com/DivineMorsels/>



The dairy across the road



Merge Café

Another option is a sit-down lunch or takeaway at Merge Café, also across the road, with its warm welcome and amazing value.^e

^e <https://www.facebook.com/lifewisemergecafe/>



The Thirsty Dog

Or, again across the road, there's The Thirsty Dog, with food as well as all kinds of drinks.^f

And on a hot afternoon, a charming place to rest up and catch up.



Inside The Thirsty Dog

^f <https://www.facebook.com/theThirstyDog/>



If you want to multi-task, there's also the laundromat. Right next door to Mokopōpaki.

Enjoy!

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ISABEL COIXET AT #DIRECTEDBYWOMEN #AOTEAROA



Isabel Coixet, based in Barcelona, has made 14 feature films, many of them award-winning. Her *Elisa & Marcela*, about two women who married in Spain — in 1901 — when one of them adopted a male identity, was in 2018 the first Netflix film selected to compete for the Berlinale's Golden Bear.

Isabel has her own production company, Miss Wasabi, which makes narrative films, documentaries and commercials^a; and is also an activist — a member of CIMA, the powerful Spanish group that in 2010 kickstarted this iteration of European women's film activism when it brought together women working in the audiovisual sector in Europe to create the Compostela Declaration.^b Later, Isabel became Honorary President of the European Women's Audiovisual Network^c that grew out of the declaration. She was also a member of the Cannes Camera d'Or Jury, led by Agnes Varda, in 2013.



^a <https://www.facebook.com/misswasabifilms/>

^b <https://cimamujerescineastas.es/>; <https://medium.com/@devt/the-compostela-declaration-2010-f4bd8cdf3a38>

^c <https://www.ewawomen.com/>

I interviewed Isabel by Skype, at the Te Auaha cinema in Wellington, on September 19 2018, the 125th anniversary of New Zealand women getting the vote, after we screened *The Bookshop*, her 2017 feature that won Goya Awards for Best Film, Best Director, and Best Adapted Screenplay.

I think it was the first time anyone tried this kind of Q&A in New Zealand. It was certainly the first time I'd tried it, inspired by So Mayer's interview of *Cameraperson's* Kirsten Johnson at the BFI.^d And I couldn't have done it without the strong support of New Zealand Film School's then-head tutor, Ness Simons, best-known for *Pot Luck*, the beautiful, funny and multi-award-winning webseries.^e

I had a feeling Isabel would be just right for this experiment. And just wonderful. And she was. My warm thanks to her and to Ness. And to Tilly Lloyd for the question about class (I was sad I missed her excellent question about the cardies in *The Bookshop*).

I started by asking Isabel about how she came to make *The Bookshop*.

Isabel Coixet About fifteen years ago I was in London and I went into a bookstore and it was there on the table. It was a new edition. But you know I have to say I had never heard of Penelope Fitzgerald. But I love books. I love bookstores. And — I don't know — there was something when I read the explanation and the back cover. And I just went home and I started the book and you know it was four o'clock, and then I finished it like at nine. And I was really mesmerized by it. I mean I can't really explain it logically. I can now but at that moment I was just, I was fascinated. I thought this woman [Florence, *The Bookshop's* protagonist] is me. If I was a widow at that time and my dream was to open a bookstore, all these

^d <https://vimeo.com/202107573>

^e <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/pot-luck-2015/series>

things that happened to her would happen to me. That's the truth. I'm an avid reader and as a film director I'm a reader before being a film director. So when I'm reading I'm really reading, I'm not looking for material. I'm not saying 'OK this will make a good movie or not'. Not at all. OK, sometimes when things are really really really obvious but not even then. When I read I really immerse myself in a book and when I'm looking for material I'm not looking for material in books.

@devt So you had quite a strong identification with the character.

Isabel Coixet Yes. And also it was about her style. I think Penelope Fitzgerald has this really sharp and dry vision of the world. And I really like that. It's not a sentimental book. In fact the book is hard. It's much more hard and harsh than the film. But I really like it. Even I like the elements that I had to get rid of when I adapted the book like you know the supernatural presence in the bookstore. I thought that was a really incredible thing. I really liked that but then I had to get rid of it and that was hard. But I couldn't find a way to give that presence or place in the film. I really regret that. I tried several times, you know, but it never felt it belonged to the film.

@devt I read in an interview that you did with Francine Raveney that the protagonist is one of the characters in all of your films that you felt closest to.^f And I wondered if, as a part of the adaptation, you were seeing a bookseller as a metaphor for a filmmaker and the kinds of challenges that you had and the courage you had to find to continue as a filmmaker.

Isabel Coixet You never know... not a very conscious way. I found out later. I mean after after I worked for years on the adaptation for instance I spoke with Tina. Tina is Penelope Fitzgerald's daughter.

^f <https://www.ewawomen.com/interviews/en-events-interviewing-ewa-president-isabel-coixet-html/>

The Christine character is based on her. She told me a million things about that time when Penelope was working in a bookstore in a little town. She just worked there for six months. And that experience was the source of *The Bookshop*. But at the same time it's true, you know, I found in my path to being a director, suddenly a couple of other people and the butcher tell you things about what you should do or what you shouldn't do. Everybody's giving you advice, especially if you're a woman. It's like everybody feels entitled to tell you what you have to do or what you shouldn't do. And since my nature is — you know, inside I'm a seven year old. So I resist people giving me orders or advice or even wisdom.

@devt I also read that this was a story about defeat, about what happens to big ideas in a small society. And later in the article that I read the journalist writes that in the film a creative person is crushed by cruel and small minded parochialism. So when you were doing that were you also thinking of times that you'd been crushed by parochialism in the film industry for instance?

Isabel Coixet Yes, in the film industry. But in life too. I mean in Florence we have two things. We have this woman who has had a sheltered life. And when she enters again into the world of let's say business or work or real life she's not prepared at all. But she is there, out there. I think in relationship to myself I realise even if I'm really much more prepared than Florence it's exactly the same, because you know when you really think what you're doing is right. Not just right, it's natural.

For her, she's very conscious this is a really small dream. She doesn't want to change the world. She is just 'OK, that's what I want to do'. And even this little piece of independence, little piece of really creating something for yourself, even that, as tiny as it is, everybody feels she can't do it. She's not allowed to do it. They will not let her do it. And I think in the end she is really aware of what's happening.

I think for me, even now I've done 14 feature films, even now I can see this mentality of 'you're not doing what you're supposed to do'. I remember I started saying I want to be a filmmaker when I was 7. And even now after all these years out there I hear people say 'Why do you do that?' And they make you feel like you don't belong to the world where you're supposed to belong. But it's OK. I manage.

@devt I reckon! is the story about class as well?



Isabel Coixet It is. And one of the things John was always telling me, John Berger [1926–2017], he was always telling me this is this is a classic class story, especially in England where ... everywhere your class and your gender are the base of every fight and every everything that is out there in your world. One of the things the Violet character is furious about is that Florence doesn't belong to the class and their class are only ones allowed to take positions about the world. And that little disruption in their order, it's the beginning of a tragedy, of Florence's tragedy.

@devt So when you dedicated the film to John Berger, was it because it was part of a conversation that you had with him?

Isabel Coixet I met John 22 years ago. And since that moment, for me he was my mentor. He read every script I directed or I wrote.

We worked together on an exhibiton based on one of his books, 'From A to X' and he knew I was trying to do a film based on *The Bookshop* and in that process there were lots of interruptions. A bunch of things. And some of them they were completely stupid like, you know, you go to a meeting and see this person say, 'But why, why does the film has to end you know on this horrible note? Why doesn't [wealthy recluse Edmund] Brundish lend her the money to buy another book store in another town?'

You're in meetings with all these people with money, the financiers, and they're telling you the story you should tell instead of the story you want to tell. And I was telling John that's what happened. He always said, There's a person in this world who has to do this book. It's you. Because you really fill the screen and also you know how to really tell Penelope Fitzgerald's story at her core. But also doing something personal.' And he was always telling me, 'Go on. Yes, you should do it. You must do it. You have to do it.' And he died. I'd just showed him like half an hour of the film. He really liked it. And then one week after [that] he died in Paris and, and you know I felt I had to dedicate the film to him. And this is the second film I have dedicated to him. There is another one called *The Secret Life of Words*.

@devt So over those 22 years was he your primary mentor?

Isabel Coixet Yes, he was my mentor. He was a mentor for a lot of people I have to say. One of the many many many many beautiful things about John was that he was always supporting people. He was always giving, it was not advice, when he talked to you about a project he was always putting himself in your shoes. He was always directing you but in an incredibly wise way. I mean photographers, sculptors, playwrights. He knew many many many people and he was never afraid to collaborate with people, to give texts and drawings and poems and everything he had, cheese, wine. He was an incredibly generous person, for me he was the most generous person in the world. He still is and every year in Madrid all the Spanish

friends he had, we have meetings and you know, we just talk about him.

@devt And did he affect how you portray women?

Isabel Coixet Well I have to say we never talked specifically about that. Of course I read all his books and of course he has a million of them. And even now, one week ago there was this new collection of texts. About encounters. I don't remember the name of the collection but it's just out in the bookstores now. It is just little stories about people he met randomly, in trains in bars, in a square, in Rome. But we talked about framing people, not just framing or looking at women.

@devt I get the sense that you adore actors and they adore you. And I wonder what thoughts and advice you have about working with actors.

Isabel Coixet The life of a director is complicated enough. So one of the things I always say is you have to work with the best people for every role. You can't hire an actor because he or she is a cool or they have followers on Instagram. First of all if you have an instinct to work with an actor, look at all her work or his work. Be very informed about everything they've done. And then once you have seen everything you will have a sense of what she or he is good at, the places they will never go. You really have to have a sense of that person. And then once you have seen that, go to a pub and have a beer or wine or whatever and have a sense of that person. Because you have to work long hours with these people and if you don't really like the person, the actor as a person, it will show. And if that shows in your work then it's no good.

I'm not a fan of rehearsals at all. I think really good actors don't need it. With Bill Nighy [who played Edmund Brundish] for instance, I think we had like one day of rehearsals and mainly it was trying the costumes and how to wear them. I was very specific about

the way he wanted to walk because for me these specific physical traits are really important, the way people move, how they take the space when they enter a room, the way they look or they don't look to the eyes of the people. For me, all these physical traits make a real person and in that real person you have to find the character.

In this case, working with Emily was fun and I love her. I think she's an incredible person. She's talented, she's intelligent and she's very humble. That's not very common. And from watching all her films even when she has a small role, there was a truth I love. And I thought why is this woman not doing like films as the main character? And I sent her the script through with the help of Patricia Clarkson and she knew the book, she loved the script and you can have a very fun conversation with her really and for me that's key.

@devt And you had quite a fun time with Patricia Clarkson too by the look of it.

Isabel Coixet (laughing) It's very difficult not to have a fun time with Patricia. She's a force of nature. She's very passionate about everything and she's a drama queen. And I... you know I found this part of her character very amusing. This is the third time we worked together and you know I would love to work with her again because she's amazing. And also she can play anything and everything.

@devt And I noticed that you work a lot with English and American actors and maybe not so much with Spanish ones. But the crew seemed to be very Spanish and I wondered what reason you have for working so much in English.

Isabel Coixet I was living in the States when I wrote *Things I Never Told You*. And for me was very natural, it wasn't a plan. It wasn't like, 'Okay now I'm going to work with American actors or with the Canadian or English'. I work in Canada and the States, in Ireland, in Japan. For me, someday maybe I would love to do a film in New Zealand or Australia. You never know. I think one of the reasons I

think films are fascinating is because you can really go into the culture of a place when you do a film. And I'm zelig, you could throw me in Japan and I'm Japanese.

@devt And you see yourself as a global citizen?

Isabel Coixet I don't know, I think the world would be a better place if we didn't have so many borders and flights and national pride. I guess as a global citizen, we can't have a national pride, because we're destroying our planet. So I don't see the pride there but you know maybe if we see ourselves more as a human race than just, you know, Australian and Spanish and Italian, maybe things will be better. I don't know.

@devt One of the things that I thought was interesting about you was that you started in advertising, which was your film school and your way of earning freedom. And is that the primary way that you've built a sustainable career?

Isabel Coixet Yes. Yeah. I was going to the university and I needed a job. I really needed a job if I wanted to keep studying. When I was a kid I dreamed of making movies, not about making commercials, but by chance I found a job in an advertising agency and I was quite good. So I keep working there but my dream was my primary goal.

And I think film schools are great. Every time I go to a film school and I do a class I think it's great to see people sharing their dream. In my case there was no one when I was growing up. I never shared that dream with the people around me. But you know anyway I was very focused and even when I was having a successful career in an advertising agency I never, never forgot what I was supposed to do. And the moment I could, I left the agency.

I have to say working on commercials I had the opportunity to work with amazing DOPs. I remember the first shoot I went on. The agency was doing a commercial for a car. I don't remember the car. But I remember the day, okay. They asked me, 'Do you want to go

on the shoot?’ and I was like, ‘Yeah’. And I went on the set and it was John Alcott there.

John Alcott was the DOP of Stanley Kubrick and he was there in Spain doing a commercial. He didn’t see very well but I saw him moving his face to one of those big lights and and just from the heat he felt on his face he knew how to light the set. And just watching this guy at work... I never took the courage to talk to him. But I spent the whole day — three days — looking at him working and I learned more just seeing him work than in any film school in the world. That’s why I say that was my film school.

@devt It is that story also why you are often your own DOP?



Isabel Coixet I am not my DOP. I’m a camera operator. My DOP is Jean-Claude Larrieu. He’s a French DOP I met doing a commercial in Paris. And you know, since that day we started talking about the films we love and the characters we love, the type of lighting we love, photography, sculpture, books, and he’s my best friend now and we have done seven films together. And also we work in a way that he takes care of the lighting and I take care of the camera and that works perfectly.

And I know that that’s not the norm. Directors normally they are in a chair looking at the monitor. I like chairs and I like lying down a lot, but on set what to do in a chair? So I love to be behind the camera. I love to feel the actors really being much more relaxed,

because I'm the person who's really capturing what they do. And to me that's my way. You know that's my path to filmmaking.

@devt And so how do you balance the directing the actors with being behind the camera? I'm not sure I could think both things at once. It's just normal for you now?

Isabel Coixet I do it. It works. I don't think it's that difficult. You talk to them at the same time, when they're performing for the camera. So you know, they they know what I'm going to do. We rehearse in terms of, 'Okay you're going to say this here and then you turn to the other actor and then the camera's going to...'. I think it's a choreography. If you know what you want and you have good people with you it's kind of easy. For me I have to say it's easier than wasting energy explaining what I want to a cameraperson and then... No. I think it's better... I can think and I can chew gum at the same time. Not three things but two, two I can manage.

@devt You're very unusual doing that aren't you, or are there lots of people in Europe who do who operate their cameras at the same time directing?

Isabel Coixet Yeah. It's kind of unusual, I think since film schools are so you know, 'You're the director, you do that'. They are so, you know, every person has this thing to do on set. They never teach people how to do it so they don't do it. But I learned to do it and I'm doing it. And there's another director, Steven Soderbergh, an American director... But no no no, it's a pity because it's really fun.

@devt And producers don't mind? They don't say you can't do your job if you are also the camera operator?

Isabel Coixet They complain. You know. But this is what I do. And then unions have to sign a million things. And in the States, you're working in a union film and you're not supposed to do it. But they do it anyway.

@devt I read an article the other day about Nicole Holofcener who's done a film for Netflix, as you have, and found it very freeing, because they pretty much left her alone. Did you have a similar experience?

Isabel Coixet Yeah. And I loved that. The film, *Elisa & Marcela*, I'm editing now is a film for Netflix and I have to say once they approve a script and they see what's your vision for the film, they let you do your job. And I think that's amazing. And for me, I think for lots of directors, it's what you want.

Lots of producers, they got famous because they have their way to put their prints in a film. But I always remember that Jack Nicholson film when he's peeing on the floor and saying, 'Hey I'm just marking my territory'. I always you know I see myself as Jack Nicholson in that film, trying to protect my territory. And if I have to pee on the floor I will. And the good thing about Netflix is that you don't have to go to the extreme of peeing on the floor because they know they're amazing at marketing films, they're putting things out there on the platform but they they admit they don't know how to make films and that's why they hire directors.

@devt And so did they hire you for this film or did you take the idea to them?

Isabel Coixet I took the idea to them.



@devt Why did you choose them for this particular one?

Isabel Coixet Because before that I tried ... Let's say this is a project I tried for many many many years to do. And this is a real story of two women who got married in Spain in the north of Spain in a really really rural area in 1901. And let's say 10 years ago when you go to a producer and say, 'I want to do a film of these two women,' you can't imagine the rejections I had. I have a collection of rejections. Two years ago I took the same script, exactly the same script, to Netflix and they love it and they say, 'Yeah sure, go ahead'.

@devt Oh wow.

Isabel Coixet Yeah...

@devt So when's it coming out?

Isabel Coixet Next year. I'm still editing. So now after you finish I'm going to go to the editing room. And I guess March next year,

something like this. [2019: *Elisa & Marcela* is now available on Netflix.]

@devt Well I don't want to keep you from the editing room but I do want to ask you a little bit about being a woman director and your activist life as president of the European Women's Audiovisual Network and working with CIMA before then; and why you bother when you've got such a rich life and you're getting your work done.

Isabel Coixet I have to say I'm not as involved. I try to do things I really believe in. And when I hear things like the director of the Venice Film Festival said they just found one woman, an Australian director, for the official selection. When they say they can't find another film worth being in the official selection that's bullshit. That can't be, I'm sorry. It's not like you select like 20 fucking masterpieces. I mean this, saying that if we do 50:50 they will not be as good.

Come on! Every fucking male filmmaker is not making a masterpiece. I'm not saying every female filmmaker is making masterpieces. It's not that. I'm just saying, 'Please, let's have a little equality here'. So that's why I was signing this letter to the director of the Venice Film Festival. I try to do very specific things. From my production company, one of the rules is there are a bunch of producers and production companies producing films made by men. What I want to do, if I produce something, a short film or a feature, it has to be a female. I think for me this is the real activism.

And when I heard for instance Reese Witherspoon, this actress was doing these things like *Big Little Lies* and all this [2019: The second season of *Big Little Lies* is directed by Andrea Arnold]. I'm like, 'But the director?'. I mean you're producing in the name of female empowerment but the directors are men. For me, that's not activism that's just bullshit.

So for me activism is lots of practical things. If I see someone struggling to make a documentary and they just need a little bit of money and push to finish it. And for instance this filmmaker I know she's doing a documentary about the cleaning people, women in towns in Spain. If she needs help I'm going to help her. That's for me it's activism.

It's not big speeches. If the director of the Venice Film Festival is saying bullshit in the press you say 'What you're saying doesn't make any sense. Just come on. Have more women there, at least be aware that the women filmmakers of the world will not agree with you'. That's my activism and that's my way to be the world.

@devt And is it also about having women on your crew?

Isabel Coixet Yes. And I think in *Elisa & Marcela* all the key people in the film were women including my camera assistant and even grips and it was really a female crew.

@devt You could find women to do sound?

Isabel Coixet No. And the director of photography, Jennifer Cox, is this very young director of photography. I produced one of her short films and I think she's very talented. It was let's say an 85 percent female crew and we managed and we finished the film on time. I think the film looks amazing and we can do things, you know!

@devt Do you think that a film about women with such a large proportion of the crew being women you actually get a different kind of film?

Isabel Coixet No. But in the film everything has a special touch. And in this case I thought, since the story... you know we have these two girls falling in love and we have a bunch of sex scenes I think it will be much easier to do it with a female crew and it was. It was really very kind of mellow. Yeah. Mellow and no people screaming

and it was a very very relaxed time. And I don't know if you had a blind test you could say this film was made by women. But for us in terms of atmosphere to work in it was easy, great and fun.

@devt Did you have women there who had children as well? I don't know if it's come to Europe, the whole thing of having a child care on set or different hours because of people having children to care for?

Isabel Coixet There were lots of women with kids and I know how you manage these things. You juggle with everything. We did it in summer so I think most of the children were on summer camps and things like that. It was the only way.

@devt Because you'd been a mother yourself as a filmmaker haven't you?

Isabel Coixet Yes. [Long pause.] And it is exhausting. You see they never they never they never ask a male filmmaker if they have kids or they don't. It's not relevant.

When Steven Spielberg has like seven kids and nobody asks him 'So how do you manage with your seven kids to make all these movies you're doing?' It's another backpack you have as a woman. But as always in life you manage.

@devt So just to wind up, we have Ness here who runs the the New Zealand Film School. And I wonder what advice you have for students who are at film school now and Ness may have another question.

Isabel Coixet For me as a director, one of things I feel is more difficult is to really be free, at least in your mind. Total freedom in life, it's you know, kind of unattainable, but you have to be free in your mind. When you face a film or a script or a little story you want to tell, just first of all you have to know the work of the people who have made amazing films before you. I'm talking about the clas-

sics to everything... Sometimes in film schools now I'm really astonished because they just don't even know the first films of Martin Scorsese or Coppola or Agnès Varda.

And I think you have to know these things, the films before you. You have to in a way be in your mind and be free. You have to have all these things, all these films of the past and present. But you have to have to in a way to be honest about what you think, what you feel and what you do and what you say, too. The moment you have a nice vision about who you are and your point of view about the world then you do something meaningful. That's all. And also another advice. Never follow the advice of another film director. (Shared laughter.)

@devt And is your advice any different to women who are starting out in film?

Isabel Coixet It will be the same advice, but multiplied by five because, girls, listen, it's going to be more difficult for you. But that doesn't mean it's impossible. It's just you will have to work much more, let's face it. I think our goal is just to make women more relaxed about what they have to do. And just make our lives a little easier. That's all. It's our mission.

@devt Thank you so much. I'll just check whether Ness has got anything more.

Ness Simons Which women filmmakers have inspired you as a filmmaker?



Isabel Coixet Agnès Varda [1928–2019]. Her life, her persona. I know her very well. We have been together on a jury in Cannes, for the Camera d'Or. And I have to say I spent eight days with Agnes Varda and I have to say that was like six years ago, and she's a force of nature and I think she is the most inspiring, not just in film and just being a person in the world. She's curious about the world, she's really free in her mind. And I I I love I love all her films. And she has done things that were never never valued at the time. And she's still there doing things. And I mean she's my hero. Wonder Woman, Agnès Varda.

@devt Well, you're my hero now. Thank you. Have a good day editing. Bye.

Isabel Coixet Bye.

First published in @devt on *Medium*, 17 September 2019.

WANURI KAHIU'S 'RAFIKI'

Accepted for #Cannes2018 & Banned At Home



The Kenyan Classification Board has banned *Rafiki* ('Friend' in Swahili), the first Kenyan feature ever to be accepted for Cannes. It is a love story between two young women, directed by Wanuri Kahiu and co-written with Jenna Cato Bass.



Wanuri tried to have the film classified for viewers 18 and above. But in Kenya, gay sex faces up to 14 years in prison and according to the **Hollywood Reporter**, President Uhuru Kenyatta told CNN in an interview earlier this month that ‘gay rights are not of any major importance’ in Kenya. The Classification Board accused *Rafiki* of being made with ‘clear intent to promote lesbianism in Kenya, contrary to the law’.^a

The Kenyan Film Commission is obviously very proud of *Rafiki*–



^a <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/kenya-bans-first-cannes-bound-film-lesbianism-1106425>

But that seems to have made no difference. As Wanuri tweeted “It all starts with suppression of a few freedoms and before you know it, you can't speak with out permission from the authorities. And then finally you wake up and you know what? It is too late.” - Allan Amanyire

After *Rafiki* was accepted for Cannes, I watched and listened to Wanuri speak about Afrobubblegum^b and thought she was extraordinary, a total delight. And I was so excited to see *Rafiki*. But now this, and regardless of anything else, it is an issue for all of us. How can we best support Wanuri Kahiu?

First published in *Wellywoodwoman* and @devt on *Medium* 29 April 2018.

^b Afrobubblegum https://youtu.be/a_avBsX6o-s?si=5o41koU79zooNJ9d

'EVEN DOGS ARE GIVEN BONES' & 'MINIMUM' AT PARLIAMENT

Thanks to the Associate Minister for Arts, Culture & Heritage, Grant Robertson, and to Jan Logie, Under-Secretary, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Justice (Sexual and Domestic Violence Issues), Kathleen Winter's *Minimum* screened in Parliament's Beehive Theatre, following Kanya Stewart's classic *Even Dogs Are Given Bones* (1982, for Dyke Productions and Auckland Women's Community Video^a), about the women who occupied the Rixen clothing factory in Levin when the owner decided to close the factory but wouldn't pay them redundancy.

It was very special that a group of women who appear in *Even Dogs Are Given Bones* were at the screening and a beautiful thing when Grant Robertson introduced the evening and asked them to stand up so we could applaud them.

^a <https://medium.com/spiral-collectives/auckland-womens-community-video-2beebdf6da09>



From *Even Dogs Are Given Bones*

And it was beautiful to watch the two works — made almost 40 years apart — together; and to watch all the *Minimum* episodes at once, in a crowded cinema.

The audience also included some of the participants in *Minimum*; and many participants in the Women's Studies Association (WSA) annual conference. Because I'd become aware that although academic women often choose their reading with regard to an author's gender they don't think about the director gender when they choose their viewing, I planned the Q & A to be a discussion between Kanya and Kathleen. I wanted to spotlight them as women directors, hear about their processes and experiences and inspire some WSA women to look out for work #DirectedByWomen. But I hadn't taken into account the effects of the work.

I now believe that *Even Dogs Are Given Bones* and *Minimum* share a characteristic with Ava DuVernay's powerful *When They See Us*, currently on Netflix. The *New Yorker* described *When They See Us* as a

...bleak, beautiful drama' [whose] 'main concern...is empathy. Not a syrupy, manipulative empathy but a rigorous, corrective one.^b

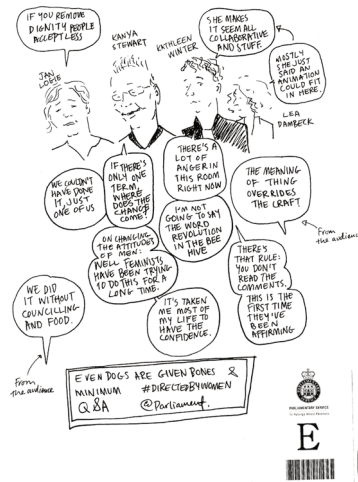
I think the responses to those screenings in the Beehive Theatre demonstrated that Kanya's and Kathleen's works were also concerned with 'rigorous, corrective' empathy. And because so many of the women represented onscreen were in the audience, I now wish I'd thought to choreograph the Q & A more effectively and to have them onstage too.

Regardless, Kanya and Kathleen — with Lea Dambeck, one of her animators — shone.^c The audience participated energetically and Tara Black, who makes comics and 'aspires to be a professional note-taker' documented the discussion.^d I loved the comments Tara Black recorded. And am thinking today about one of them: 'the meaning of the thing overrides the craft', which I understand as 'the thing's relevance'.

^b <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/06/24/how-when-they-see-us-and-chernobyl-make-us-look>

^c <https://vimeo.com/user46563172>

^d <https://taracomix.com/>



Tara Black's notes

'Craft' is essential to effective storytelling. But I'd argue that 'relevance', and 'rigorous, corrective empathy' can be key elements within craft; and are sometimes paramount. They readily transcend the old boundaries between and language about film, video, television and webseries too; and expectations about the screens where viewers will watch them. Again, Ava DuVernay provides an excellent example in a tweet—

We shot it like a film. Scored it like film. Color timed it like a film. Same process. So when my 15-year-old family friend passionately + proudly told me yesterday that she binged all parts ON HER PHONE... I just blinked hard and said "Wow! Wonderful!" (June 2 2019)

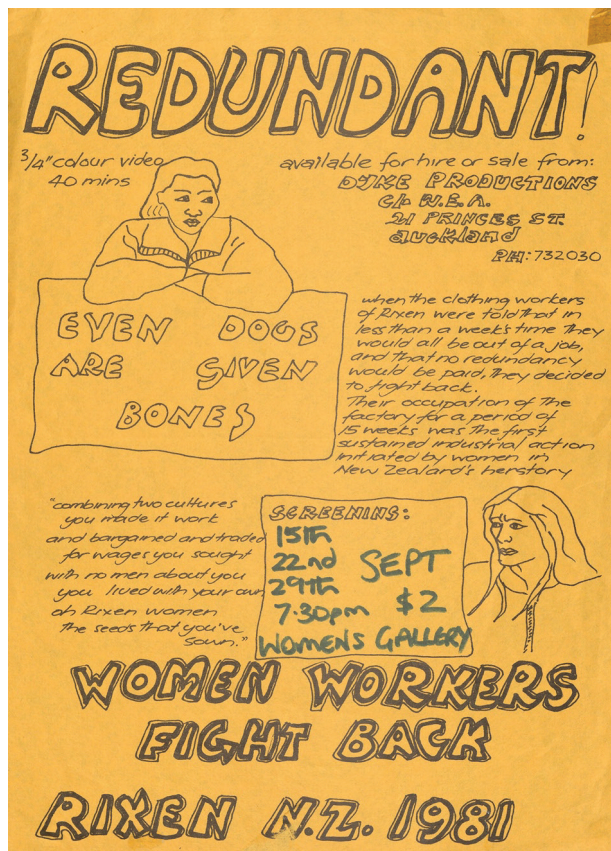
Melanie Reid's recent 'video story', *Uplift*, about the mechanisms behind one example of 'NZ's own taken generation[s]', much of it shot on family phones as it happened, is another example of a story-

teller's 'rigorous, corrective empathy'^c. Powerful, relevant, storytelling grabs us whether it's recorded as a film or television or web series or on our phones; and whether we watch it on a phone or other device or in a cinema. But it's a pretty special joy to watch this kind of work in a cinema followed by a Q & A with directors and other participants? It certainly was that night at the Beehive.

First published in *Wellywoodwoman* and @devt on *Medium* 24 June 2019.

^c <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2019/06/11/629363/nzs-own-taken-generation>

KANYA STEWART & 'EVEN DOGS ARE GIVEN BONES'



Poster by Carole Stewart, Kanya Stewart.

Filmed over a 3 day period at Rixen Manufacturing, Levin, during the eleventh week of occupation by 43 workers, all but 3 of them women, in their struggle to receive a fair redundancy from their employer after their dismissal. The day after we arrived there was a meeting organised with the F.O.L. to discuss the future of their protest, whether the F.O.L. would continue to give their backing and support (\$100 per week for each worker), without which the occupation could not continue.^a We were there to film the outcome

^a F.O.L. Federation of Labour.

of that meeting, which decided unanimously to continue the struggle and the occupation.

The occupation began on September 3rd 1981, we did our recording in November. During the fourteenth week, tired out and with no hope of receiving any redundancy from their employer, the women decided to go home.

We shot 3 ½ hours of video – with a crew of three women. Mari Hancock, Julie Lambie, Carole Stewart. Mari did research, she'd previously written and researched the impact of the folding of Mosgiel Woollen Mills on the women clothing workers who were put out of work. She liaised initially with the Rixen women. Mari and Julie did interviewing and sound, I was directing and on camera. Later, Julie and I did the editing together, it took about three weeks. One disaster after another, everything kept going wrong, difficulty of getting access to equipment, no continuity in terms of time, technical problems. Patricia Sarr's photographs we used, Chiara Corbelletto did the graphics for the title, Anne Crozier did the commentary, Mereana Pitman wrote a song at our request for the tape, 'Rixen Women'.

Initially we had no finances for the project – though before we went we managed to get enough individual women and a few groups to donate money towards the tapes – some \$300. We paid for our own airfares and managed to get the equipment through Massey University for a small fee – \$50 I think. I had made an application to the Committee on Women for \$600, and the day we arrived in Palmerston North we received a letter from them asking for confirmation that we were authentic filming!, and wanting more details. We did get that money from them later on. That was good – none of us got any payment for the work we did, but the grant meant that we could afford to make a few toll calls, to check copyright for photos, and to pay the women who worked for us. Anne and Chiara both got a fee

for their contribution, Mereana refused. It also meant we could be reimbursed for the money spent on airfares.

Julie and I managed to get a P.E.P. job^b to do video, so during the first month of that job we worked on Rixen – I wrote the script and then we worked from there, with quite a few changes in the process. The result is a 40 minute colour documentary which looks at the struggle of one particular group of women who chose to fight back against unfair treatment by their employer who refused to give them fair redundancy in recognition of their services at a time when women all over the country are being laid off work, frequently without redundancy and often little prospect of future employment.

We wanted to make the video because we are feminists, because we wanted the experience of the women at Rixen to ‘stay alive’ and be shared with women throughout N.Z. Historically Rixen is important, the first sustained industrial by women in N.Z.

If we’d thought about money before we did it – like paying wages, expenses etc. – we’d never have done it. Costed out in terms of working hours, it would have cost something like \$5,000. If we’d had that kind of money, we could have afforded to hire equipment suitable for television broadcast quality. But it was a spontaneous venture, and if it hadn’t been done that way we wouldn’t have done it at all. Where do women get \$5,000 from to make movies. But we will one day!

Written by Kanya to accompany a screening at the Women’s Gallery
323 Willis Street Te Whānganui-a-Tara 1982.

^b P.E.P. Project Employment Programme run by the Labour Department and very productive for artists, paying a little more than the dole.

~~Juliet Batten~~ X

Fiona Clark

Allie Eagle

Marian Evans

Pond
Claudia Eyley

Keri Hulme

Anna Keir

Bridie Lonie


Heather McPherson

Joanna Paul

~~Nancy Peterson~~ X~~Helen Rockel~~ X

Carole Stewart

Tiffany Thornley


 busy elsewhere

OPENING 10 Sept. 5pm

-plus VIDEO screenings of the Opening Show Jan 1980

RIXEN TAPE A Video on women's struggle in the workforce

Wed. 15, 22, 29 Sept. 7.30 at the gallery

\$1 unpaid/\$2 paid workers

10 SEPT.-6 OCT.

THE WOMEN'S GALLERY 323 WILLIS ST. Ph. 850179

KATHLEEN WINTER & 'MINIMUM'



Kathleen Winter

Kathleen Winter's *Minimum* explores the lives of women of various ages, ethnicities and sexualities working in minimum wage and

under-appreciated jobs in Aotearoa. In hospitality; as carers for old people and as teacher aides for disabled children; as call centre and security workers; as cleaners and bus drivers; often dealing with zero-hours contracts, racism, sexism and abuse; often with multiple jobs, bad housing and a struggle to buy food; and, if they have children, not able to see their children often enough. A 10-part webseries, *Minimum* was made with support from the Emerging Artists Trust, New Zealand on Air (NZOA) and Wellington City Council.

Kathleen searched hard for women with stories to tell, through social media and other networks, with a website where women could tell their stories anonymously if they liked. I enjoyed playing a small, early, part in her meticulous process and found the finished series — told in a mix of participants speaking to camera and animation — both heart-breaking and inspiring.

Kathleen is a vibrant, hardworking documentary filmmaker educated at the New Zealand Film School where she received the Robin Laing Scholarship; and at London's Royal Holloway and Victoria University of Wellington. She's made a group of short documentaries about media: the award-winning *FeminEast Makes Zines*,^a about a group of three young feminists who 'introduce us to zine-making and its potential to share feminist ideas'; *DVD Dreams*,^b 'a love letter to the last remaining video stores in Wellington' and the forthcoming *Datastream Instant Print*. Her short film *He Kākano Ahau-From the Spaces In Between*,^c for Loading Docs in 2017, screened in Sheffield Doc/Fest's Light Cinema Free Screen a few weeks ago. I interviewed Kathleen late in 2018; and have added an update question and a little bit about *Minimum*'s screening in #DirectedBy-Women last year.

^a <https://vimeo.com/105721481>

^b <https://vimeo.com/192986058>

^c <https://loadingdocs.net/he-kakano-ahau/>

What did you bring to this project?

Because *Minimum* started as a ‘research project’ — I was gathering as many stories as possible for a possible future script — my approach was pretty unique in that I wasn’t initially striving for a specific type of end-product. I wasn’t fishing for the most dramatic stories or even thinking about the visual look of our interviews. It was purely about having a conversation with the women in front of me.

Maybe what I brought to that was — being someone who was also holding down a couple of day-jobs at the time, being someone who absolutely hates being on camera — I definitely removed any pretense of glamour from the process. We all had a shared purpose for wanting those stories told, we all know that there’s no profit being made from a series like this, so being honest about our political drives was what this project was about from the start.



still from *Minimum*

As a minimum wage worker yourself, what have you learned?

This project has really helped hit home for me that poverty is cyclical, and working hard isn’t always a key to escape. That’s something

I thought I knew — that we have an economic system (capitalism!!) which is inherently broken and means there will always be people on the bottom. But we're still fed the idea that people can climb up from the bottom if they work hard enough, try hard enough, are smart or talented enough.

To break down this myth you need to hear the stories of multiple people who do try hard, work hard, are smart and talented and whatever other condition they're meant to fulfill — but still can't make progress. Once you realise that, you also realise that people who have 'made it' or live comfortably don't deserve that success any more than anyone else. No one deserves to live in luxury while others are living in poverty, and we need to start focusing on collective, community success, rather than on individual gain.

There's a lot of irony around my own wages over the 2 — nearly 3 — years I've chipped away on *Minimum*. The first grant I got — from the really generous Emerging Artists Trust — was used for research. I didn't pay myself at all, and used that money for crew and gear hire. Same goes with my second grant from Wellington City Council ; it was enough to give a financial koha to my crew, but definitely not to pay myself a wage.



Security guard Lavinia, centre, with Kathleen, left, DOP Jess Charlton right, and the rest of the *Minimum* crew Photo: Mark Tantrum

While we were waiting to hear if our NZOA funding application was going to come through, I was a few weeks away from needing to pick up a hospo job to keep me afloat. When the funding did come through, I was suddenly on a weekly salary and being paid more than I ever have been — to make a series about women working for the minimum wage. That salary was for a period of just under 5 months. In a few weeks the project will be finished and I have no idea what my financial future will be.

I guess what I've learned is how much privilege and support we need to make art — I can accept such an inconsistent income because I have no dependents, but I do have family and friends who will take me in if I suddenly need it.

Is there anything you'll do differently another time?

Right now I'm reflecting on how to more assertively ask for what I want as a director from my crew. I'm used to working on very low-budget productions where you're paying everyone less than they're worth, so the dynamic is always that everyone working on the film is doing you a favour. So when people are doing you a favour, you don't treat them badly, obviously.

Even in a fully-funded production like this I still often find myself thanking people so much for their time and working around their schedules etc — which is a really good thing!! — but I forget that I'm not asking for favours anymore. That this is my crew and we're doing a job together and I can ask for what the film needs without pleading or convincing. I guess my goal for the future is to be more straight up without being a dick, y'know?

Does it make a difference that you knew that He Kākano Ahau and this will be online rather than in cinemas?^d

^d <https://loadingdocs.net/he-kakano-ahau/>

It actually makes a pretty huge difference — to the edit more than any other part of the process. With online content you have to spend the first 15 seconds fighting for people's attention, and then you have to work much harder to hold it. In some ways this is a good challenge in that it forced me to really think about what was most important / compelling about the story. But it also means that most of your edit choices come down to — how quickly can we cut to the next scene. There isn't as much room to sit on an empty frame or allow a breath — not unless you've really earned that time by hooking your audience at the start.

Maybe that's the biggest difference, the need for a 'hook' in the opening 15–30 seconds. And knowing we'd need that hook while we were shooting meant I shaped some of my interview questions around making sure we'd get it.

Are you going to continue with docs rather than fiction?

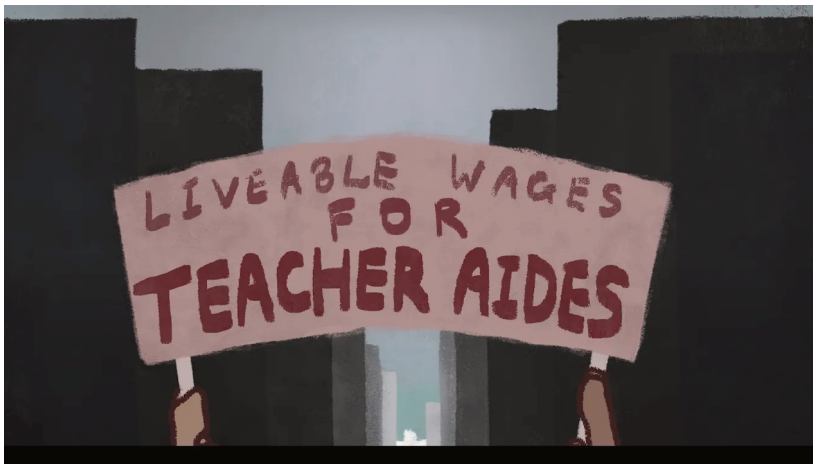
Most probably in the short-term, yeah. I really love true stories and I love what documentary can do. Everything I make will continue to be politically focused, but I do love films that blur the line between documentary and fiction and hope I can do more of that in the future.

We also have to be honest that there are more women making documentary films because they're cheaper to make. I watched a fiction feature directed by a man the other day and it was 'fine'. It felt in many ways like a Film School film, in that it was pretty self-involved, using slightly over-the-top metaphor and imagery, but ultimately fun to watch.

And I watched some interviews with the (all male) creative crew afterwards and I found myself feeling really angry. And I had the thought, 'I wish I could have the chance to do that'. It really surprised me, because I didn't know that I WANTED to make schlocky art pieces, but I guess I wish I had the option. Right now I

don't feel like I do. Making an 'art' film which is purely contrived and higher-budget to produce would be such a risk, and if I failed as a female director, I would never be given another chance.

This is something I'm only just considering, and I don't mean to devalue documentary as a genre. It's incredibly important and creatively challenging and inspiring to work in. I'm happy to be making them and desperate to make more, but I think it's worth reflecting on why documentary is a form that women are pushed into.



still from **Minimum**

And are you still going to use it for a future script?

Not likely. Now that we've been given a platform for these women space to speak their stories in their own words, I don't feel any further need to 'script' their stories or produce drama from them.

What are you working on now?

A webseries called *After White Guilt* (working title) which focuses on Pākehā identity, and how people with colonial ancestry can push

through feelings of guilt to take positive action. The series, funded by NZOA, is scheduled to come out in October, to coincide with the 250-year anniversary of Captain Cook's arrival in Aotearoa. It's really important to me that we use that anniversary to have meaningful conversations about ongoing colonisation and the responsibilities Pākehā have. It'll go out through the *New Zealand Herald* primarily.^e



First published in *Wellywoodwoman* and @devt on Medium 24 June 2019.

^e <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/kahu/beyond-white-guilt-pakeha-and-colonisation-episode-1-cooks-legacy/S3QCBMFXSOR2ORMJWUOCNGTEGU/>

2019

Programme



#DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa is back, this time in collaboration with Wellington's Emerging Women Filmmakers Network;^a and generous assistance from those listed in the credits.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The multi-dimensional programme celebrates the visits of Maria Giese, Hope Dickson Leach and Nasreen Alkhateeb to Wellington,

^a <https://www.facebook.com/groups/242118849902767/>

after they participate in the Power of Inclusion Summit.^b Thanks to Māoriland,^c Maria and Nasreen will also attend a screening in Ōtaki.

Maria Giese is the Nipmuc/US director who initiated the ongoing Federal investigation into Hollywood's discrimination against women directors.^d

Hope Dickson Leach, UK director,^e co-founded Raising Films — an organisation that advocates for parents/carers working in the screen industry, and develops practices to support them.^f



Nasreen in Greenland for NASA

Nasreen Alkhateeb, US director, leads diverse broadcast, digital and film storytelling projects that empower new voices and advocate for gender/racial/ability rights and climate change issues.^g

^b <https://www.nzfilm.co.nz/international/showcase/power-inclusion-summit>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHZOW2Pc4Po> (Maria Giese); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NweOGjMu7wY> (Hope Dickson)

^c <http://maorilandfilm.co.nz/>

^d 'Maria and her inspiring work to end discrimination against women directors' <https://wellywoodwoman.blogspot.com/2015/12/maria-giese-her-inspiring-work-to-end.html> (2015); 'Director Activist Maria Giese: Update on Women Directors, the ACLU & the Feds' <https://medium.com/womens-film-activism/director-activist-maria-giese-update-on-women-directors-the-aclu-the-feds-bdb6a8fcb115> (2017); on Radio New Zealand: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/standing-room-only/audio/2018714340/maria-giese-tackles-hollywood-over-women-directors-or-the-lack-of-them> (2019);

^e <http://hopedicksonleach.com/> : link gone

^f <http://www.raisingfilms.com/>

^g <https://allmediastorytelling.com/>

THE PROGRAMME

Sunday 6 October, 2 to 6pm-ish

Women Directors' Afternoon Tea with Maria and Nasreen. They'd like to hear about local directors' lives and practices; and to share stories from their own lives and work, in a 'domestic' setting.

Free. More details: directedbywomen2019@gmail.com.

Monday 7 October, 6pm



Half the Picture, directed by Amy Adrion, screening in Beehive Theatre, followed by Q&A with Maria, Hope, Nasreen and host Jan Logie, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Justice, Domestic and Sexual Violence Issues.^h

Half the Picture celebrates the groundbreaking work of female film directors and investigates the systemic discrimination that has, for decades, denied opportunities to far too many talented women in Hollywood. It features Maria Giese alongside directors such as Ava DuVernay, Gina Prince-Bythewood, Jill Soloway and Lena Dunham.

Free. All welcome. RSVP to directedbywomen2019@gmail.com by Oct 3 required.

Tuesday 8 October, 10.30am

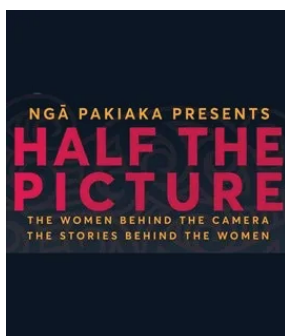
^h <https://www.facebook.com/NewshubNationNZ/videos/239278620321978/?v=239278620321978>



Raising Films Discussion with Hope Dickson Leach at Southern Cross 39 Abel Smith Street. Look out for the table with the metal slinky on it.

What are the issues for parents and carers who work in the screen industry in Aotearoa? Do we need a local Raising Films (there's one in Aussie)ⁱ?

Free. All welcome and children very welcome. No RSVP necessary.



7pm

Half the Picture screening at Māoriland,^j 68 Main Street, Ōtaki, introduced by Maria and followed by a Q&A with Maria and Nasreen.



ⁱ <https://www.facebook.com/raisingfilmsaus/>

^j <http://www.facebook.com/MaorilandFilm>

This screening will be presented by Ngā Pakiaka — the Māoriland Charitable Trust's group of rangatahi (aged 14–24) film leaders from across Aotearoa. Tickets: \$6. All welcome. Doors open 6.30pm.

Wednesday 9 October 2pm



This Changes Everything^k screening at the New Zealand Film Commission's Hayward Cinema, Ghuznee Street. Q&A with Maria to follow.

This Changes Everything is a documentary directed by Tom Donohue that examines and reflects upon the gender disparity within the entertainment industry. It includes numerous interviews by female directors, producers, talent, and highlights Maria's activism.

Free. Limited seating, please RSVP to directedbywomen2019@gmail.com ASAP. If there is enough interest, a 4pm screening may be added.

AFTER-THOUGHTS

It was a beautiful, rich, visit. Though another time I aim to a) have a smart phone to hand and b) a dedicated photographer: the images below mostly come from the visitors' social media!

^k <http://www.filminquiry.com/this-changes-everything-2019-review/>

Various inspiring combinations of Hope Dickson Leach, Maria Giese and Nasreen Alkhateeb attended screenings of Amy Adrion's *Half the Picture* or Tom Donohue's *This Changes Everything* and Q&As.



A group of filmmakers on their way from Backbenchers to Parliament for the screening

Parliament's screening of *Half the Picture* was preceded by a warm welcome from and a beautiful speech by Jan Logie, the Under-Secretary for Justice (Sexual and Domestic Violence Issues) and the evening's moderator.

I think everyone had a good time...



Māoriland's generous hospitality is legendary (& their continuing practice of screening #DirectedByWomen films in at least half their programme: book your travel now for 2020!) and we had a

great night there with *Half the Picture* thanks to Ngā Pakiaka and Madeleine de Young & co and to writer/director and moderator Oriwa Hakaraia from Ngā Pakiaka, Nasreen and Maria.



Maria, Nasreen and Oriwa at Māoriland

At Park Road Post, there was a great lunch and tour, thanks to Vicki Jackways; and a couple of days later a well-attended staff screening of *This Changes Everything* with Maria and Hope, with a high proportion of men in the audience, always a good thing.



At Park Road Post

This Changes Everything also screened at the NZFC's Hayward Cinema with Maria and Nasreen, followed by an interesting conversation, thanks to Rouzie Hassanova, after a delicious and entertaining lunch with a large group of NZFC staff.

There were other dynamic meetings, too: with local filmmakers in

groups— including the Directors Afternoon Tea — and as individuals; with a group interested in starting Raising Films in NZ.

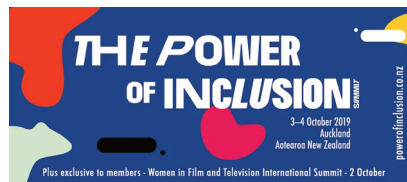


Hope at the Raising Films meeting, with Emerging Women Filmmakers' Pachali Brewster to her right.

And producer/director Jaimee Poipoi interviewed Hope¹ and Maria (coming soon, along with more from Hope's interview!) for her Five Quick Questions series.

Warm Thanks To—

WIFT NZ^m & the **NZ Film Commission**,ⁿ who brought these women over here for the Summit and offered a fine welcome in Wellington.



¹ Link unavailable.

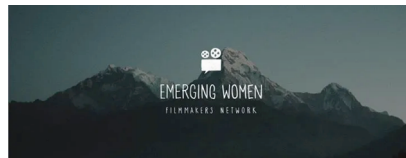
^m <https://www.facebook.com/wiftnz/>

ⁿ <https://www.facebook.com/nzfilm/>

To WIFTNZ for assistance with the Raising Films event.



Many thanks too to Jackie McAuliffe; Lorna Kanavatoa; Jaimee Poipoi; Melissa Clark-Reynolds; Pachali Brewster from Emerging Women Filmmakers; and Polly Stupples, for their vital, often specialist and always very generous support without which this visit couldn't have happened as it did; and to all those who brought their energy, ideas and other kind contributions to the Women Directors Afternoon Tea.



& ngā mihi nunui, always, to Kohine Ponika's whānau for this kete.

First published in *Wellywoodwoman* and @devt on *Medium*, 24& 25 September 2019.

MARIA GIESE, DIRECTOR ACTIVIST: WOMEN DIRECTORS, THE ACLU & THE FEDS

Updated in 2025



Maria Giese Photo: Reggie Burrows Hodges for the Bluestocking Series

2017: About a year ago, I published an interview with American director Maria Giese about her campaign to end discrimination against women directors in the United States, a collective human rights-based action that's globally unique and significant for all of us who watch and are influenced by Hollywood entertainment.^a Here's an update, with a summary for everyone, followed by the deep nitty gritty for women directors and our allies.

^a <https://wellywoodwoman.blogspot.com/2015/12/maria-giese-her-inspiring-work-to-end.html>

SUMMARY

Wellywood Woman (@devt): *What have you been up to?*

Maria Giese: It's been quite a year. After 20 years, I left LA and moved to Connecticut with my husband and two children to write a book, *Troublemaker*. It tells the story of my Hollywood insurgence and my battles in the Directors Guild of America (DGA) during the past 5 years, with a bold group of other women directors. It also describes my journey getting the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to launch the campaign for women directors that led to the current Federal government's investigation, by 'the Feds': the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC), the Labor Department's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), and the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH).

I've been working hard to support the investigation, foster independent legal actions, and keep this issue alive in the mainstream media, through speaking publicly, talking to journalists, and networking with other activist individuals and organisations. We want to trigger a paradigm shift in people's thinking so that everyone can comprehend and agree that it is fair and just and in accordance with America's ideals that women contribute equally to our cultural narrative. I've also been part of five documentaries and have developed ideas about the role of distribution.

Together with Christine Walker and Caroline Heldman, I am organising the 2017 Women's Media Summit on gender equity among women storytellers in US entertainment media. It will take place March 31 — April 2 in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

WW All women directors have to draw heavily on their imaginations, their hearts, their resilience. They have to be tenacious. A few, like you, are also activists with a collective vision for all women. Who and what has influenced you? Tell me about your childhood.

MG My biggest influences are my parents. My mother is a masterful landscape photographer who spent much of her career working in Ireland and Northern Ireland. She and the Nobel Prize-winning poet Seamus Heaney published their work together in *Sweeney's Flight*. I would say she is my biggest influence in terms of writing and visual style. And my father is a geophysical oceanographer who has influenced me deeply. You could not ask for a more kind, compassionate father.

For a girl growing up with four high-spirited older brothers it could be possible to feel overshadowed. Each of my brothers is gifted in his own way and they presented a lot of challenge to me — both physically and intellectually. But my parents' attention to me was always nurturing. As a scientist, my father believes deeply in the relative equality of all living organisms, including even people, so he always made me feel that I was equal to anyone and that I could accomplish whatever I set out to do. That said, he has imbued in me a strong belief in fairness and justice and a commitment to civic duty to uphold these ideals wherever I see them violated. He has done this himself in terms of conservancy and preservation on Cape Cod. In fact, he's probably just as much of a revolutionary on the Cape as I have tried to be in Hollywood.

Also, I spent my formative years from age 4 to 9 in Puerto Rico where my father was starting up an oceanography department at the University of Puerto Rico. Those were amazing years, living in a barrio surrounded by sugar cane fields, snorkeling off the coral reefs, swimming in Phosphorescent Bay at night, and then the poverty and rawness of life — that all turned out to inform my world view, both the aesthetic and the socio-political.

When I was 9-years-old we moved back to Truro full-time. It presented massive culture shock starting up in a small, puritanical New England School. My brothers and I had been going to a 'free school' in the barrio and we were surrounded with hippy culture,

often with very little parental oversight — like a gang of little savages. I saw so much, maybe too much sometimes. When I came back, I was a little wild. And it took awhile for the kids in Truro to come around to me, let's just say. Still, I came to love school, and that passion for learning took me all the way through graduate school to the start of my career as a director.

It's a good thing I grew up with a revolutionary spirit, or Hollywood's astonishing bias against women would have snuffed out my dream to make films. Just as soon as I solve discrimination against women directors for all women, I'll get back to work!

WW As I think about your questioning of whose stories get told, your courage, your vision and your tenacity, I remember that you're of Native American descent and notice that indigenous women are leaders on these issues both in the US and in New Zealand, where a Māori woman, Chelsea Winstanley — mentored and supported by other Māori women — is the only contemporary woman director to join Jane Campion in speaking publicly about the need for gender equity in taxpayer funding of film.^b How, if at all, does your indigenous heritage factor into this work?

MG Yes, I have Nipmuc Indian heritage on my mother's side, one of the First Nations of Native America. Nipmucs lived around Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island for about 30,000 years before Europeans came. In my family we are very proud of this heritage — we are blessed with many Native qualities and cursed by others. I suspect my fearlessness is rooted in my Nipmuc blood. I would gladly lead a charge in a battle over a worthwhile cause. It's not surprising that I returned to my homeland after all those years in LA. I never felt at home in that vast desert. I was born in Rhode Island, I grew up in Massachusetts, and now I live in Connecticut. I am home. The father of my children is a 12th generation

^b <https://medium.com/womens-film-activism/merata-is-always-with-us-f954eb-d5f4e>; <https://wellywoodwoman.blogspot.co.nz/2015/10/merata-is-always-with-us.html>

Connecticut colonist. I sometimes joke that his ancestors massacred my ancestors. I guess it's not that funny though.

WW Have you and other activists noticed an increase in support as the issue is taken more seriously at an official level?

MG Yes, I certainly think so. We have more credibility. We are taken more seriously in the media, in the industry, and in the government. In 2013 we were totally invisible — this issue was a complete non-starter. People were essentially just embarrassed by the subject. Now everyone recognizes its significance nationally, and how it impacts society globally.

It's perplexing that the presence of discrimination had been articulated in the past but it wasn't obvious to us all as being a civil rights issue. And it's phenomenal how it's become one of the most discussed feminist issues today.

It took some years to get the word out widely but now it resonates with men and women because, seen through the light of new vocabulary, everyone can see how incredibly important it is.

Hundreds of organizations and off-shoots are bursting forth for women filmmakers and storytellers. It's a very exciting time. Now, with the election of Trump, people are further unified and galvanized toward fighting for equality and civil rights.

If we women want equality for ourselves individually, we must fight for it collectively. The personal must become political. We can no longer accept being made invisible, because we aren't the ones telling the stories. We women must, absolutely **MUST** unify and fight — single-mindedly fight without stopping until we have achieved real, enduring equality — not just in writing, but tangibly as citizens, workers, as leaders, and as recorders of our human history on earth.

THE NITTY GRITTY

WW Let's rewind a little. 2012 was the beginning for you, wasn't it?

MG Yes. There were already individuals and organizations concerned with Hollywood's gender imbalance on the screen and behind the camera. There were also three previous Federal investigations that could have advanced American women directors (1960's, 1970's, and 1980's) but failed to solve the problem. The courageous 'Original Six'^c who founded the DGA-Women's Steering Committee (WSC) in 1979 litigated. But 2012 saw the dawn of the broad media campaign for American women directors, and all the vast groups and organizations relating to women directors sprung up in the years that followed, because that was the year a small group of women directors in the DGA met in the DGA-WSC and had a joining of minds about the need for immediate, radical activism against the systemic exclusion of women directors and storytellers from US entertainment media.

It was primarily Rachel Feldman, Melanie Wagor, Rena Sternfeld, Dianne Bartlow, Lexi Alexander, several members of 'Original Six' and of course me. But there were many other women directors who helped as well. We persevered against our union and against the cronyism in the DGA diversity department to produce the 2013 Summit for Women Directors. It was through that effort that all the change you see was initiated — the 2012 establishment of the *Women Directors in Hollywood* blog;^d the 2014 ACLU campaign for women directors in Hollywood; and the 2015 Federal investigation into discrimination against women directors in Hollywood.

This movement will end only when we have achieved 50/50 voice as storytellers in our entertainment media and resolved the national

^c <https://psmag.com/social-justice/the-original-six-and-history-hollywood-sexism>

^d <http://www.womendirectorsinhollywood.com/>

and global problem of having women virtually excluded from the US cultural narrative.

THE ACLU AND THE FEDS

WW After its own investigation, instigated by you, the ACLU sent a 15-page letter to the three Federal organizations, calling for them to investigate. They also sent it to The New York Times, which published it on May 12 2015.^e And then the Feds became involved?

MG Yes, that's right. I actually went to the EEOC first — back in February 2013. But if a woman director files an individual discrimination complaint to the EEOC she has no protection from blacklisting, and the EEOC did not seem to believe they could take this on as for women directors as a class. This was tantamount to a failure of our government to protect our Constitutional rights: equality, free speech, equal protection under the law, even the right to pursue happiness. So, with this in mind, in May 2013 I went to the ACLU, as an individual.

After a number of meetings with people at the ACLU, to explain the issue, and after I provided them with all the research I had done, and after I brought a strong core group of other women directors to them, they made the decision to launch the campaign in 2014, as a collective campaign of research, outreach, advocacy, and media engagement to work toward solutions.

The ACLU sent the *New York Times* a copy of its letter to the Feds to communicate to mainstream media and to people everywhere just how significant and far-reaching the ramifications of this issue are. It wanted to alert women to the fact that the campaign was on. And it wanted to spark a media storm that would help make this issue broadly comprehensible and credible.

^e https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/05/12/movies/document-13film-women.html?_r=0

It succeeded on all counts. Five months later, on October 2, 2015, the *Los Angeles Times* broke the news that the Feds had initiated an investigation into discrimination against women directors.^f And on May 11, 2016, exactly one year after the ACLU letter was published, the *Los Angeles Times* again broke the story that the Feds would now ramp up the investigation, to include the whole industry.^g

You know, we often think of industries and organizations (like the EEOC, media, entertainment, and so on) as being self-contained and having separate agendas. We have to stop thinking that way and look at our society as a holistic unit. These industries and organizations are made up of people like you and me — people trying to achieve collective goals, solve problems, communicate, and collaborate.

Many organizations in Hollywood that have been effectively free of Federal oversight for decades have been allowed to become corrupted by a few. This happened in the DGA — which, without oversight, developed into a system of cronyism that mostly served just a few members. This is a key reason women have experienced such profound exclusion from the directing profession in the past decades.

The sad part of this is that a 1978 EEOC report on discrimination against women and minorities in the US entertainment industry recommended that the unions set up committees in cooperation with the studios and signatories to address this problem. But by leaving Hollywood to govern itself, the EEOC created a self-perpetuating system of entrenched racial and sexual discrimination. That's like telling a pack of hyenas to govern itself in a fair equitable way. It's no way to uphold all Americans' rights under the law. What's the

^f <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/moviesnow/la-et-mn-women-directors-discrimination-investigation-20151002-story.html>

^g <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-0512-aclu-women-directors-update-20160509-snap-story.html>

point of having laws if we don't have enforcement agencies in place that can effectively manage compliance?

I've asked our Federal government to step up and do its goddamned job. It is our right as American citizens to have our civil rights and Constitutional rights protected and enforced. Today we women are denied our rights, and as a result we are unfairly silenced and censored in our country. I will not step down until this hypocrisy, this failure of justice is fully rectified.

WW What can the Feds do that the ACLU can't?

MG Since the EEOC and the two other Federal agencies agreed to investigate, the ACLU has continued to work on this issue, in cooperation with them. So, it's really four organizations functioning together to help seek solutions to this problem and that's exciting. Working as four sister organizations on the same issue is very powerful — together they can litigate, lobby, engage the media, use education, advocacy, and community outreach. They can do it better together. We could not have gone any higher or further beyond taking the issue straight to Congress.

The ACLU and EEOC do similar things. But the ACLU is a non-profit, non-partisan union, the nation's 'Watchdog' organization for Civil Rights, funded to the tune of \$100 million annually by its 500,000 plus members. Its mission is 'to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to every person in this country by the Constitution and laws of the United States'. It is powerful and can move quickly and effectively to bring attention to civil rights abuses.

In contrast, the EEOC is a quasi-independent government agency, a division of the United States Department of Justice (DOJ), financed by American taxpayers. Its whole reason for being is to enforce equal employment opportunity and it is overseen by the United

States Attorney General, the chief lawyer (the law enforcement officer) to the Executive Branch, to the president of the United States.

According to its own website, the EEOC ‘has the authority to investigate charges of discrimination against employers who are covered by the law. Our role in an investigation is to fairly and accurately assess the allegations in the charge and then make a finding. If we find that discrimination has occurred, we will try to settle the charge. If we aren’t successful, we have the authority to file a lawsuit to protect the rights of individuals and the interests of the public. We also work to prevent discrimination before it occurs through outreach, education and technical assistance programs’.

If the EEOC deems it appropriate, they can take powerful measures to solve the problem. This is how Melissa Goodman from the ACLU explains it —

They have the power to do nothing or to act. Acting can take the form of... filing what are called, in the case of a federal agency, ‘commissioner’s charges.’ In the case of a state agency, there would be ‘directive charges.’

The difference [between an individual complaint and an EEOC investigation] is — let’s say I experienced discrimination in my job tomorrow. I, as an individual, could go file a complaint of discrimination with one of these agencies. I could say, ‘I work for Corporation X and they discriminated against me’.

This process we’ve asked these agencies to consider invoking is different. They don’t need an individual like me to step forward. Instead what they do is they investigate an industry as a whole. They can say, theoretically, ‘We find that there is systemic bias’, and they can file charges themselves, as the agency, against a whole bunch of employers. Or they could pick one and make an example of them.

So they can do that on their own without needing an individual complaining about a specific incident of discrimination.

Melissa Goodman is a lawyer and I am not, but I will also say this: if the Attorney General took an interest in this case, profound change could result quickly. It's all a matter of convincing people that something systemic is failing and needs to be fixed.

Federal attention to this issue could result in legislative change. It could also result in reforms to Title VII of Civil Rights Act of 1964, a federal law that prohibits employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, and religion and generally applies to employers with 15 or more employees, including federal, state, and local governments.

Or it could result in a broadening of the utility of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which regulates interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable, so that equal employment opportunity among directors in Hollywood is more closely scrutinized and enforced.

If the EEOC finds Title VII violations, it can bring a class action lawsuit and if the suit proceeds to trial, a judge could order injunctive relief in addition to penalties, fines, compensation. A judge could also order injunctive relief (where a court orders certain action or remediation) or negotiate a settlement with the industry that could be very far-reaching. In the settlement between the EEOC and the industry, major shifts could result such as the creation of a timetable for goals of gender equal hiring, among many other possibilities.

I think we have already made great headway in this effort. We just need to hit the ball home.

WW What's the role of the DFEH and the OFCCP?

MG The DFEH is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. Part of its mission is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment. And the OFCCP's mission is to be sure that wage earners receive the 'contractual promise of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity required of those who do business with the Federal government'.

As you can see, each organization has the authority to lean on Hollywood for the sake of women directors, as individuals and as a group who are discriminated against and who are not receiving their full, rightful protections under the law.

I cannot say what the Feds are actually doing because they function in complete confidentiality. Only the ACLU can speak publicly about what it is doing, because it is an independent union and foundation. That's why when we hear updates in the mainstream media the news comes from the ACLU.

So, to answer your question, all of these organizations can take and are taking an active role. The EEOC, DFEH, and OFCCP are still in the investigative process. To know more, I would have to get a job working for them.

WW Did the Feds intensify their investigation because of what the EEOC learned in their interviews with fifty-plus directors that you wrote about in late 2015?

MG Yes, they did. Because of what they learned from women's testimonies they decided to ramp up the investigation to include the whole industry.

The investigation officially began on October 2, 2015 when the EEOC sent their first letters out to us women directors requesting interviews. We don't know what they learned from these interviews except by talking to each other and through inference, because the

EEOC functions in confidentiality, conferring only with the organizations co-participating in the investigation and with the ACLU.

We women can learn a lot from each other, however. More than fifty women directors provided very similar histories of exclusion and discrimination. Having served for two years as the inaugural DGA Women Directors Category Rep in 2013 and 2014, and having co-produced the 2013 DGA-WSC Women Directors Summit, I can tell you I've heard not fifty but hundreds of stories from DGA and non-DGA women who faced devastating discrimination.

The intensification of the investigation after the interviews indicates that they found plenty of evidence of violations. Now the EEOC, as the representative of our Federal government, is reaching out to executives, agents, and guild leaders, among others to learn more.

As we all know, providing evidence of discrimination to the EEOC that could lead to legal action against one's employers (whether in studios, networks, agencies, guilds, or production companies) could jeopardize one's career in Hollywood. It seems unlikely that many people employed in Hollywood will go willingly into interviews.

More likely the Feds will have to subpoena individuals, and of course then things will get interesting. I have heard from a lot of people — including some women directors who chose not to speak to the EEOC in the first round — that if subpoenaed they will readily tell the agents everything they need to charge ahead with legal action. One cannot be blamed for telling the truth once subpoenaed, after all.

WW What could the Trump presidency mean to the EEOC investigation?

MG Overall, it feels catastrophic, but I'll try to look at it with optimism for a moment.

It could go several ways: Trump just appointed Jeff Sessions as his Attorney General. On the surface, Sessions looks very bad for civil rights in general — he is on record as being against gay marriage, for example, and I suspect equality is not his passion.

Also, the EEOC's General Counsel, David Lopez, (the head lawyer) just announced he will step down in the next six months. This means Trump will appoint a new General Counsel, which could be good or bad depending on who he picks. So far all his picks have been very conservative.

Very likely Trump will also appoint a new Chair to the EEOC itself. Jenny Yang is the current Chair and her key pursuit has been equal pay, and obviously she also has supported the investigation into discrimination against women directors. If she goes in the summer of 2017 (and I think she will), then we have to wait and see what the new Chair (also appointed by Trump) will focus on.

One good thing is that the EEOC is an independent agency that reports to Congress (like the FBI). Independent agencies in our Federal government generally have wide latitude and discretion in what they choose to pursue. However it all depends on who's running things, and Trump will make those decisions.

Trump may make budget cuts to the EEOC and historically, when faced with budget cuts, the EEOC tends to pursue high-impact, high-visibility systemic cases. That could be good for us as our case is precisely those things: high-impact, high-visibility, and systemic.

Add to that the fact that Trump hates Hollywood. He might like to see the Feds go after the studios and networks to point out how hypocritical liberal, democratic Hollywood is.

Another thought is that incoming Vice President Mike Pence has consistently opposed equal pay. If equal pay efforts in the EEOC are stalled, perhaps that would help encourage the EEOC to pull all

their dynamite on Hollywood's exclusion of women from the directing profession.

I hope the ACLU will prioritize the investigation, and not see it as trivial compared to all the other immense challenges they face. I hope they will see it as being foundational to advancing all other civil rights. But I worry that for the ACLU the effects of this election will trivialize the battle for women directors. On the other hand, I think both the ACLU and the EEOC understand that all women's issues and all civil rights issues are profoundly influenced by our entertainment media.

I've argued vociferously that gender equal hiring among directors is the keystone to all civil rights issues because if women contribute equally to our nation's storytelling, our cultural narrative will naturally begin to shift all people's thinking toward a more equitable ethos.

CALL TO ACTION

WW Today, what can US directors do individually?

MG We can do many things: we can learn everything possible on the issue, find out what's already been done so we don't waste time covering the same ground. We can question the DGA and call for an investigation of our union. We can call and write to the ACLU and the EEOC and give testimony — (yes, that possibility is still available to us!). We can talk to each other, build community, write articles, join groups of women filmmakers and directors. We can advocate for each other, give each other jobs, support each other's work.

On a bigger scale, we can get involved politically. We can call or write our representative in government. I've been working on a letter women could send to representatives. It reads like this—

December 23, 2016

The Honorable Chuck Grassley

2222 Rayburn House Office Building

United States House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Accelerating the EEOC Investigation for Women Directors in Hollywood

Dear Senator Grassley,

I am writing to ask for your support as Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee in helping unify our nation's legislators behind a bipartisan effort to encourage the US Department of Justice EEOC toward legal action and legislative change to mitigate illegal discrimination against women directors of film, TV, commercials, and new media.

As you may know, in 2014 the ACLU launched a campaign for women directors in Hollywood that resulted in the current, ongoing 2015 EEOC investigation for American women directors. This investigation is being headed up by Marla Stern-Knowlton at the EEOC in San Diego.

The stories and images that emerge from our nation's entertainment industry both help define our national ethos and contribute to the voice of our civilization. Statistics show, however, that women are nearly shut out from participating equally in our nation's most influential global export — our media.

In the United States today nearly 100% of the media content created in Hollywood and distributed around the world represents the voices and perspectives of men almost exclusively — especially our studio films (96%), TV shows (85%), and commercials (99%).

Three previous Federal investigations that could have advanced American women directors (1960's, 1970's, and 1980's) failed to solve the problem as they resulted in no legal action or legislative change. It is both a moral and legal imperative that the current investigation does not repeat that history. Therefore, I'm asking you to support the EEOC toward realizing effective and enduring results.

The argument has been put forth that the best way to remediate this staggering problem is for Title VII to undergo reform, making it enforceable in Hollywood. Currently, Title VII is primarily useful for individual complaints of employment discrimination, but fails to provide a solution to the industry-wide, systemic exclusion women face in the directing profession.

In contrast, Title IX [a comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity], enforced by the Office of Civil Rights, has been extraordinarily successful. Since Title IX was signed into law in 1972 it has been scrutinized by the House Subcommittee on Equal Opportunities and has undergone well over a dozen clarifications, amendments, and related adjustments that have contributed to its extraordinary success over the decades. With your help, I believe we can make Title VII just as effective as Title IX.

If we act now, we can take advantage of the EEOC's historic investigation and bring women's voices and perspectives equally into the content that gets produced in America's entertainment industry. In so doing we can catch up with the many other countries around the world now actively forging initiatives for 50/50 gender hiring mandates among directors.

Sincerely yours,

Maria Giese

CLASS ACTION

WW And there's also the possibility of participating a class action lawsuit?

MG Certainly, if the EEOC files a class action case, we can join the class. I'm also consulting with a private law firm in DC that's investigating a parallel civil class action suit for women directors, which has been fascinating. Both an EEOC class action case and a civil class action case would be fantastic news for women directors. I would be happy to be the lead plaintiff representing the class in any class action, so no other women would have to use their names.

Our ability to provide proof of sex discrimination is essential to the goal of launching a class action lawsuit charging Hollywood with Title VII violations. But based on the credible new studies providing evidence of this discrimination, legal action seems like a no brainer. Furthermore, studies and new reports on upcoming film productions indicate that these numbers are getting incrementally worse.

WW How far has the civil action got? How can directors become involved?

MG Thus far, that private law firm is in an investigative period. I hope they actually pursue it. If the class in the class action suit involves women directors from every directing category, we can all conceivably join.

So far, I have been encouraging this firm to pursue a case for women commercial directors because that category has deep pockets, is a small, contained community in the industry, has publicly searchable rosters, and has the worst female employment numbers of all the categories — perhaps just one percent female director employment in commercials, (yes, I said 1%).

Many solutions may be considered. But with or without class actions, the ultimate solution needs to be legislated and needs to involve

reforming Title VII so that it can be effectively enforced in Hollywood. All women directors should continue to call and write the ACLU and the EEOC to report discrimination. Their words and anecdotes can remain confidential but will still have tremendous force in helping the organizations fight for them. There is no need for fear — the EEOC and ACLU have proven to be completely confidential.

Then, we need to find ways to perhaps expand the purview and utility of the FCC — or create another Federal entity to oversee and enforce gender equal hiring among directors and storytellers in US entertainment media. We have seen the results of 'voluntary' efforts throughout history — they are rarely enduring. We see brief surges in terms of the advancement of women, but then the numbers fall back into stasis.

Think of suffrage: women have the legal right to vote, what if it were not enforced, if we had the right, but were blocked at the ballot box? Theoretically, we women have equal employment opportunity through Title VII, but we are effectively blocked from entering through the professional doors. This results in our censorship, our silencing, and we have seen that we cannot use the law to fight that because we get blacklisted in the industry, and the EEOC has not yet figured out how to fight for us as a class.

In order to be able to participate fully in our society, we women must be able to contribute to our stories, to our cultural narrative — it is essential to the validity of our Constitution, and our founding ideals. That must be guaranteed with laws that are readily enforceable — laws that have real consequences if they are violated. That's what I'm fighting for — something real, not something that will soon dry up and turn to dust, only to be blown away with a single breath. I want something real, tangible, and enduring — I want something that results in quantifiable equity immediately, not in 20 or 30 or 50 years.

THE DGA

WW What about the DGA? Have there been shifts there?

MG Yes, the DGA has radically shifted — as if an earthquake hit them, but their response has been to fortify their walls, pull in, cover their tracks, and put on a false show of making change. Their corruption is even deeper now as they have imposed discriminatory new by-laws that silence activism in the guild.

Their system of cronyism is even more entrenched as they identified and deputized female allies among the membership willing to sell-out in exchange for jobs and positions in DGA governance. They have actively recruited women to help them silence feminist activism by members like me.

The DGA needs to be investigated by the National Labor Relations Board and it should have their diversity department shut down. In 1983, the DGA filed class-action lawsuits against Warner Bros. and Columbia Pictures, alleging discrimination in the companies' hiring of women and ethnic minorities represented by the guild. But, as Judge Pamela Rymer stated in her 1985 ruling in that case the DGA cannot effectively protect the equal employment rights of their women members.^h

As a union run by a vast majority of men, the DGA faces a conflict of interest in advancing its women director members. All directors in the DGA are competing against each other for directing gigs. It is truly foolish and naive to think these guys will just give up their lion's share of jobs so women can work, too. There's too much money at stake and too much power to be lost. They will never hand over anything valuable without being threatened with fines and punishment — in short, forced by the might of our laws.

^h Story: http://articles.latimes.com/1986-11-17/entertainment/ca-3890_1_women-directors/2

Hollywood needs oversight because it is comprised largely of a greedy pack of avaricious, unprincipled gold-prospectors. They do not look at the American entertainment industry as belonging to all Americans, and representing all Americans. They are not considering how the stories that emerge from Hollywood make up our collective cultural narrative, and form our national ethos. They are just thinking about how to make more money and become more powerful.

We women can turn to our legal and moral rights as citizens and fight them to win our place in this industry that also represents us and belongs to us. We can fight them and win if WE are unified — if we stop stabbing each other in the back. Unfortunately, few of the women who are currently getting work are willing to risk their sliver of the employment pie to reach out to other women. That is very short-sighted.

We women as a marginalized, but majority population in the United States need to empower ourselves through unity and efforts toward collective remediation. I hope for our sake's and for our world's sake that we do it soon — that we do it now.

THE SUMMIT

WW And then there's the 2017 Women in Media Summit.¹ Who's involved? What will the Summit cover?

MG Christine Walker is the Summit producer — a veteran and very skilled film producer, and president and CEO of the Provincetown International Film Festival. My co-chair is Caroline Heldman, a professor at Occidental College in Los Angeles and the director of research for the Geena Davis Institute on Gender and Media.

¹ <https://womensmediasummit.org/about/>

The Summit will assemble our nation's best legal minds, legislators, and changemakers to examine our evolving Constitution and identify how our Federal laws and enforcement entities are failing women. The goal of the Summit is to create a unified non-partisan strategy of Federal action and legislative reform to achieve enduring gender equity among US storytellers in accordance with America's ideal of fairness and equal representation.

We will have speakers, panels, workshops, and brainstorming sessions. The Summit is open to everyone but this is not an event in which we want a lot of people to come as audience members to listen to speakers. We want a three-day brainstorming event that results in historic change. There will be speakers and experts, but the voices of all the participants are going to be very important. Historically, the biggest problems get solved with ideas coming from unexpected places. We want those inspired voices.

We will have a website up soon, and there is a great deal of need for volunteers in many positions. Our funding came fast as a response to the recent election, and the Summit is coming fast, too. Just 10 or so weeks away!

THE DOCUMENTARIES

WW *You are also involved in five feature documentaries on this issue. Can you list them?*

MG Yes, I can mention four of them. And we can all contribute to some of them.

Amy Adrion's *Half the Picture*^j

Cady McClain's *Seeing is Believing — Women Direct*^k

^j <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czhHcoPFQ8> (trailer) <https://www.halfthepicture.com/>

^k <https://www.seeingisbelievingwomendirect.com/>

Jennifer Dean's *The Second Sex & The Seventh Art: Women Directors in Film*¹

Tom Donohue's *This Changes Everything*^m

DISTRIBUTORS

WW Anything else?

MG Yes, I'm working on an approach to solving the female director problem by targeting distributors. It could be a brilliant end-run if we can make it work.

In many senses, distributors already control hiring in two substantial ways: first, they currently enforce all kinds guidelines involving labor rules that production companies must obey, and they release or don't release content based on compliance of these rules. And second, distributors' parent companies often own the production companies themselves, making distributors inextricably bound to the hiring sector.

Harnessing the power of the distributors to equalize gender hiring relieves of the burden from the courts, the Guild, and from producers. It would be up to the production companies to fulfill the rules set forth by the distributors, just as is done all the time in accordance with FCC rules and regulations. Currently, distributors cannot release broadcast media content to the public that fails to comply with FCC regulations.

Charging Hollywood distributors with having to enforce gender balanced hiring would simply mean they have to add this requisite to

¹ https://www.academia.edu/3141354/The_2nd_Sex_and_the_7th_Art_Women_Directors_in_Film; <http://the2ndsexandthe7thart.com/>

^m <https://www.kanopy.com/en/product/changes-everything-1>; <http://variety.com/2016/film/news/geena-davis-hollywood-gender-inequality-documentary-1201790922/>

an already established list of rules and regulations that they enforce. Then we would have to expand FCC utility to encompass all US entertainment media, not just broadcast. This would be straightforward work for them: if producers fail to deliver content directed at gender parity, they cannot release it.

And this approach may be particularly appealing to producers as their creative decision-making is not impacted. If producers don't want to hire women on a particular show, they don't have to. They must simply provide alternate content that women are hired to direct. They must only make sure more women are hired on other shows in order to keep the hiring ratios appropriately balanced.

Maria Giese
Film Director & Activist
Fighting for Gender Equality in Hollywood

"A veritable crusade."
 —Manohla Dargis,
The New York Times

"An inspiring speaker!"
 —Christine Walker,
 Provincetown Int'l Film Fest

Recipient of the prestigious 2016 Stanford University EQUITY Award for instigating the biggest industry-wide federal investigation for women directors in Hollywood history. Carrie Rickie of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* called Giese "a real life female crusader."

Speaker Maria Giese wrote and directed the feature films *When Saturday Comes*, starring Sean Bean and Academy Award nominee Pete Postlethwaite, and the award-winning indie feature *Hunger*, based on the novel by Nobel Prize winner Knut Hamsun. Educated at Wellesley College and UCLA Graduate School of Film and Television, she is an active member of the Directors Guild of America and recently served as the inaugural DGA Women Directors Category Representative.

Speaking Engagements
 Contact: aegisfilms@earthlink.net or (310) 678-9632

UPDATE 2025

One month after this interview was published, in early 2017, *Deadline Hollywood* reported that the investigation was over and the EEOC, which doesn't comment on its investigations, had moved into the settlement phase: it was talking with the major studios to resolve

charges that they systemically discriminated against female directors.ⁿ A knowledgeable source had stated that —

Every one of the major studios has received a charge contending that they failed to hire women directors. . .The EEOC is attempting to resolve the charges but, if unable to, may file a lawsuit.

From the limited information available it is probable that the EEOC had found enough evidence of systemic discrimination to file a Commissioners Charge. This gave the Commission the power to subpoena and to request documents. It was, wrote Maria, in a *Film Inquiry* article —

...probable that the EEOC has offered the studios the opportunity to settle...If settlement fails in one or all of the studios, the EEOC can file a public "Pattern of Practice" lawsuit in a Federal court. If a lawsuit proceeds against all six studios, the case could make its way to the Supreme Court.^o

There is so far no public announcement of settlement being complete.

Maria's commitment has shifted to other activities. She produced the *Provincetown Women's Media Summit* (2017, for which she also co-

ⁿ <https://deadline.com/2017/02/hollywood-studios-female-directors-eeoc-investigation-1201912590/>; <https://www.aclu.org/news/womens-rights/women-directors-might-just-get-hollywood-ending-they-have>

^o <https://www.filminquiry.com/eeoc-v-hollywood-studios/>

authored a White Paper)^p; and gave an influential TEDx Talk.^q After *This Changes Everything* was released in 2018, she co-produced the Sundance hit *Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power* (2023) directed by Nina Menkes, developed a *Timeline for Women in U.S. Entertainment Media*,^r and is now developing the *Global Map for Women in Entertainment Media* — the first-ever international, public-facing web platform that allows people from any country to compare and contrast the state of women in film and television industries worldwide. She continues to work on her memoir, *Troublemaker*.

First published in *Wellywoodwoman & @devt* on *Medium*, 11 January 2017.

^p <https://womensmediasummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/PFS-White-Paper-Press-Release-FINAL.pdf>

^q https://www.ted.com/talks/maria_giese_hollywood_interruptus_the_battle_for_women_s_voices_in_entertainment_media

^r <https://www.brainwashedmovie.com/employment-discrimination>

2020: ROUZIE HASSANOVA & 'RADIOGRAM'



Rouzie Hassanova at work

Based on a true story from 1971, award-winning *Radiogram* is set in a Muslim community in Bulgaria under the Communist regime (1946–1990), where religious expression and western music are forbidden. It's about a father who decides to walk almost 100km to the nearest

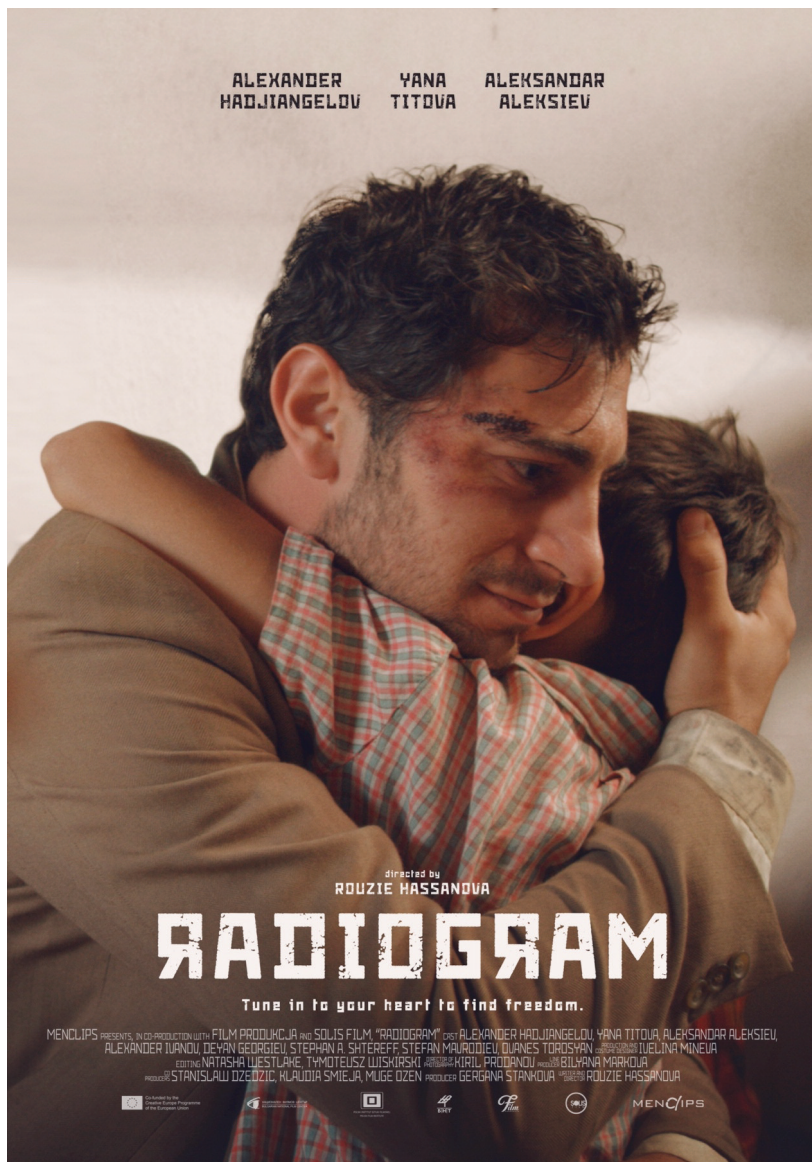
town to buy a new radio for his rock 'n' roll obsessed son and it celebrates the strength of the human spirit, family, friendship and the power of music.

I can't remember how Rouzie and I met. But I remember an exciting long walk with her around the beachfront in Oriental Bay, not long after she arrived in New Zealand with her Kiwi family, after 20 years living and working in London. At the beginning of the walk I knew she was an award-winning writer/director of several short films and a feature. But by its end I'd learned that she is so much more: she has extensive experience within post-production, international film finance and distribution, production and drama development. And a lot of fun. And it was no surprise when she later became the Development Executive at the New Zealand Film Commission (currently on maternity leave).

And it was no surprise, when I first saw *Radiogram* in 2018, that the small test audience loved it for its writing, its story, its direction and its performances (it has won multiple awards). At our #DirectedBy-Women screening later in 2018, it played to a packed cinema, followed by a brilliant Q&A with Rouzie and fellow writer/director Cathasaigh Ó Fiannachta.^a Again, the audience loved it.

And, of course, I had lots of questions.

^a <https://medium.com/women-s-film-activists/hang-time-casey-zilbert-9c38boorfd4c>



@devt: As someone from a Muslim background — perhaps the only one in this country who's made a feature film — you hope that, because of last year's tragic events, audiences will approach *Radi-*

ogram with a desire to understand and relate to the Muslim community. Why did you choose to tell this story in particular?

Rouzie Hassanova: The story was inspired one day over a coffee, when I heard my grandfather recall how in the 70s he risked his life to get a radiogram for himself, for his son, for everyone in the village.

Years after I heard that story, I wrote a short film script, which got nominated for the Robert Bosch Award^b and following that I was encouraged to develop it into a feature film by the East European lab called ScripTeast. The story took a long time to form into a screenplay because I was too close to my family and wanted to stay loyal to all of them. But in film you have to be honest and consider the audience at the same time. The script took eight years of development.

What appealed to me was the universal theme of a father risking his life to make his son happy. And having grown up hiding behind a Christian name and discriminated against for being Muslim, I wanted to share a story about my community that I'm so proud of and let the viewer inside so they can relate and understand. After all people are all the same, we believe in the same God who we call different names. I am not sure if the film is fitting with last year's tragic events, but I hope that its human story will allow the audience to see Muslims as everyone else.

@devt: One element of the story is that the regime compelled members of the community to change their names, a very specific kind of oppression. Was it only Muslims who had to change their names?

Rouzie: Bulgaria is predominantly a Christian Orthodox country with an over 1300 years old history. Ruled by the Ottoman Empire

^b <https://www.filmprize.de/en>

for 500 years, Bulgaria naturally has a healthy Muslim population. There are a few different Muslim communities, but the main ones are Pomaks, whose origin is debatable, and Turks living in Bulgaria. All of them were the subject of different assimilation campaigns — 1912, 1940s, 1960s, 1970s and the mid '80s.

Communist ideology is about creating one nation, where everyone is the same (equal) — status, education, wealth, etc. It prohibits any religious expression, influence or individualism that would threaten its power. As part of equalising the nation under the Communist regime, the assimilation process included changing the names of individuals within communities that were deemed 'different'. This is why the government first targeted the Romani, who easily adopted their new names. Then it was the Pomaks, who are dispersed and hidden in the Rodopi Mountains. They had to change their Arabic names to ethnic Bulgarian ones and to achieve that the Communist party paid their own people to get the job done, so it was hush hush and away from the public eye.

They didn't expect to be met with resistance, but there was plenty. People lost their lives rather than change their names. This is because in the Muslim religion if you adopt a new name, Allah will not know who you are when you die and won't be able to judge your sins from good deeds, and thus you will end up stuck in the middle forever.

@devt: How, if at all, had things changed by the time you were growing up? Were you able to listen to anything you wanted to?

Rouzie: The last assimilation process started in '84 targeting the Turkish Bulgarian community and lasted till the fall of Communism in '89. At first, people protested peacefully, but when they were forced to change their names, it got out of hand. Those that resisted were met with bloody violence, others chose to starve to death, while most packed their bags and left for Turkey. This did not go unnoticed internationally and some argue that it led to the fall of

the regime. I was nine years old at the time and remember it well. We were filled with hope that we will be accepted as true Bulgarians, after all we were born there. But unfortunately the fear remained, this is why a large part of the Muslim community chose not to restore their Muslim names. On the plus side as soon as the Wall fell in Germany, and Communism collapsed in East Europe, we could listen to any music we wanted to. This is when I heard Michel Jackson for the first time.

@devt: What were the challenges and the surprises and the pleasures of making *Radiogram*? Were any of them specific to your being a woman writer/director?

Rouzie: We struggled to get finance from Bulgaria, because of the project's Muslim themes and characters. And although many people encouraged me to make a thriller / action, I wanted to tell a family film. I didn't want to add a rape scene or a sex scene because that would sell tickets. I wanted to tell a story that would be easy to relate to and stay true to my family and the Muslim spirit. I wanted to show that my family is like everyone else's, that regardless of religion and status, they represent every family around the world, that Ali represents any person under oppression.

There were also plenty of challenges because of our limited production budget of €125,000. From finding the cast and crew that would agree to work for little to no fees, to reworking the script the night before the shoot so it accommodated the lack of extras. We also faced some threats from locals in the middle of the night, who were worried we're making a propaganda film. But this is when a great producer like mine, Gergana Stankova, can do amazing stuff to make it work and spare you any concerns.

Being a woman and a first time director had its effect, I was constantly tested and challenged by the much more experienced crew, but sometimes you need to remind everyone that this is your story, your vision. Don't get me wrong, I often asked for feedback

and ideas from everyone, as I am a firm believer in collaboration. But there were a couple of occasions when I had to show I had balls.



Rouzie (centre, with blue shirt) during filming

What was fantastic was having experienced cast that encouraged me to be true to the community and suggested we change the dialogue to the local dialect for authenticity, just two days before shooting. I am very grateful for their encouragement and trust, as this changed everything, including their own performances.

@devt: You've said that *Radiogram* is about a man looking for a sense of freedom in a world of oppression. What does a 'sense of freedom' mean to you as a filmmaker, a woman, a woman from a Muslim background living in New Zealand?

Rouzie: Freedom is a different feeling for everyone. It comes from within, from your heart. This could be having a family, winning a race, escaping a war zone, or simply listening to the music you love. When your identity is oppressed, anything that gives you a sense of freedom is enough to keep you going through the tough times.

What I wanted to show with the movie is a slightly different view, that a name is just a name and identity is about about knowing who you are and staying true to your self and your beliefs.



And as a woman director, who has not done a film since *Radiogram*, my current sense of freedom are my two daughters, a short film I am hoping to film later on this year and music, lots of music.

@devt: I love the music in *Radiogram*! Was it easy to get the rights?

Rouzie: That took years, I am not joking. To clear music rights takes such a long time when you have a limited budget. In the end we cleared only the publishing rights for most of the tunes and got musicians to record them for us, which was cheaper.

@devt: What's next for you?

Rouzie: Besides the short film which I mentioned, I am in the middle of writing three different ideas and slowly going crazy because of lack of time. Having kids has been a much bigger challenge than any film I have made. :)

@devt: Tell me about the short film?

Rouzie: The short is about teen sisters (immigrants), who get stuck on their way home and are forced to hitchhike home, only to be picked up gang members. It's another true story, but this time it's something that happened to me and my sister. The film is about judging on appearances, about manaakitanga.

The hardest thing I have had to accept is that I am unable to do as much as I would like to. My family and other general life obligations mean that my time is constantly interrupted or completely stolen. This has definitely affected my ideas and abilities.



still from *Radiogram*

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‘RADIOGRAM’ AT PARLIAMENT: ROUZIE & ANNIE COLLINS

Rouzie Hassanova’s award-winning *Radiogram* was #DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa’s first screening for 2020, at Parliament on 16 March, the day after the first anniversary of the massacre at two Christchurch mosques.

It was hosted by Jan Logie MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Justice, a visionary and very effective politician. In particular, Jan’s an outstanding advocate for those affected by violence and discrimination, including women in the screen industries, through her support of the Screen Women’s Action Group,^a as well as #DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa’s programme. The screening was followed by a Q&A with Jan, Rouzie and legendary editor Annie Collins. It was just before New Zealand’s first Covid-19 lockdown.

We got together for a drink and a snack at Backbenchers, along with our lovely photographer Adrienne Martyn,^b and then crossed to

^a “SWAG (Screen Women's Action Group) is committed to changing the culture that enables bullying, harassment, discrimination and other abuses of power over women in the screen industry. We will collect ideas and advocate for changes that will promote respect.” <https://www.facebook.com/screenwomensactiongroup>

^b <https://www.adriennemartyn.com/>

Parliament's Beehive theatre. (Since then New Zealanders have become very familiar with this venue, where almost-daily Covid-19 press conferences are streamed, with the Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, other Ministers and the Legendary Dr Ashley Bloomfield.)

Lorna Kanavatoa welcomed us all in the voice of the mana whenua, Taranaki Te Ātiawa, and introduced Jan as 'one of our local Porirua people who we're so proud of having amongst us and who speaks on our behalf'.



Jan speaks from the heart
(photo: Adrienne Martyn)

When Jan spoke, she reminded us that before March 15 2019 'members of the Muslim community had been raising alarms for us for months and that they hadn't been heard, about rising levels of hatred and violence that they were seeing'.

And she continued: '*Radiogram* is a film about a father who decides to walk almost 100 kilometres to the nearest town to buy a new radio for his rock and roll obsessed son. And the film celebrates the strength of the human spirit, family, friendship and the power of music, and is based on a true story from 1971, set in a predominantly Muslim community in Bulgaria under the communist regime, where religious expression and Western music are forbidden. And so there are many themes in this story that feel relevant today, about the human spirit and how we create communities and enable people to live free lives, for everyone within our communities'.

Jan also referred to why *Radiogram* hasn't been seen more widely: 'In 2016 there was research done that looked at all of the films across the world that have been distributed in any form. And only 16 percent of those were by women. Which is pretty shocking. But then, actually, those that made it to theatre release was only two percent. So gatherings like this are subversive. This is at some level,

almost an underground railway for women's film. And I think it is on all of us to to push for more opportunities for, and more pressure, for the diversity of stories to be told and to be told in the same range of places'.^c

Rouzie then introduced *Radiogram*.



Rouzie introduces **Radiogram**
(photo Adrienne Martyn)

The Q&A

After the screening, Jan introduced Rouzie and legendary editor Annie Collins, there to question Rouzie.^d Rouzie's young daughter Emily joined them at first and Cushla Parekowhai joined them at the end of their conversation, enriching the

discussion with another dimension. Jan and Lorna then closed the evening.

Soundtech kindly made a beautiful (unedited) recording of the event, which includes everything except the film and Lorna's closing remarks.^e

This is a lightly edited transcript of Jan's post-screening introduction, Rouzie and Annie's discussion and some of the audience questions at the end.

Jan Logie It's an extraordinarily beautiful and moving film. [Applause.] And I'd like to welcome up Rouzie and Annie Collins... I think we can all, after sitting through that, understand why it's won awards around the world and acknowledge what an incredible

^c Showtools (<https://www.showtools.com/>) provided an infographic that showed the New Zealand government's 2015–2019 investment in large budget screen production: just 0.97% of almost \$374m allocated to projects directed by women.

^d <https://medium.com/spiral-collectives/annie-collins-editor-extraordinaire-e631bf1c26c8>

^e <https://archive.org/details/rouzie-hassanova>

achievement that is, particularly as a first feature film and how lucky we are to have Rouzie living in New Zealand. [More applause.] ... I'm really looking forward to the conversation between Rouzie and Annie Collins, who I suspect is known to most people in the room. But in case there's somebody who isn't as familiar with the film industry, Annie is one of New Zealand's leading film editors who has edited I understand over 50 films, around 50 films. Maybe you haven't done the adding up, but when when I was scanning through, it was a very, very long list, and of some very important films for us as a country, including the *Poi E* video which for me is personally very important. And [Merata Mita's] *Patu!*. So I'm really looking forward to the dialogue between the two of them. And hopefully [Emily's] face will cheer up when you get to sit next to your mum, because that was quite amazing, wasn't it? Aren't you proud of your mum? Yeah. So I welcome you up onto the stage. All of you.



Annie Collins, Rouzie, Emily
(photo: Lorna Kanavatoa)

Annie Collins Thanks very much, Jan. [Emily joins the panel.] We thought we were going to have a third person on this panel anyway, so I think it's just right. Kia ora tatou katoa. My feeling is that the introduction or the choice of this film on this day, after the Christchurch massacre commemorations is actu-

ally, for me, a perfect film. It's... It is just the right film.

Rouzie Hassanova Thank you. I mean, for me, it's very difficult to judge that because you know, it's it's what happened last year, it's it's it's horrible. It's something that, you know you never want to see and you don't want to experience and it's you know, there's nothing I can say. Thank you. And I didn't know if a film is fitting to mark the anniversary because film is an expression, it's an art, especially my version of the story is an expression of what I feel my granddad and

my dad were going through at the time. I wasn't alive at the time, so it was very...

You know, I had to consult myself with a lot of relatives and a lot of you know, friends and family and people in the village and, and from all different perspectives, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, because I didn't want to offend anyone. I wanted to make a film that celebrated Muslim culture and introduced it in a very relatable kind of way. It was very important to me that I wanted to let people in and understand us rather than feel a distance from us. So when Jan, thank you for the invite and Marian mentioned that they wanted the film to be shown here to mark the anniversary my first reaction was no way a film can take anything away from what happened. But then I was encouraged that it is fitting because it allows people to understand. It allows people to relate and and and include and feel like they know the culture a little bit better after that.

Annie Collins Mm hmm. Bulgaria has a huge history to it, and do people here who haven't been there know where Bulgaria is? (Laughs.) I had to Google to find it.

Rouzie Hassanova A lot of people do. Yeah, but we are north of Turkey. That's the best way to describe it. And north of Turkey and Greece. And south of Romania, yeah. So we're just all Balkans really. We're all the same. I feel like... I've been to Turkey many times. I've been to Greece. I've been around most of the Balkans. And I feel like we're one big family just living in different kinds of countries. The food is the same. The people seem to have the same customs and similar kind of understanding of life and everything. So I feel like we're one big family. We just end up being in different countries.

Annie Collins Mm hmm. Because you've got about five countries surrounding you, haven't you? And the Black Sea.

Rouzie Hassanova On west I mean, on east, sorry.

Annie Collins Yeah. And... (Laughs.)

Rouzie Hassanova It's all very confusing.

Annie Collins And what that means it seems to me is that there is constant incursions into and shifting of borders and boundaries all through the centuries. And so the country is just continually...

Rouzie Hassanova It's very hard because it's on that route into Europe. So if you're coming from the Middle East or immigrating from that region or even from Africa, you can still come through Turkey and Greece and Bulgaria. Sometimes it's a good choice, but they usually choose to go from Macedonia and Serbia. And somehow that's why I think the Balkans are [in a] very important position geographically because there's so many people who have gone through. And that's why Bulgarians are so different in terms of how we look, because it's been taken over, empires after empires after empires. I mean, we were under the Ottoman Empire for five hundred years. So we're very influenced by the Muslim community and the culture. But the Muslim community is a minority there. So it's interesting and the same with Greece. But we've also been in the Roman Empire. I mean, so many empires have taken us over. So we are big mix of lots of nationalities and lots of colours and lots of heights and colours of hair and all sorts.

Annie Collins One of the things that really interests me within *Radiogram* is that there are quiet little essences of the things that people do when they colonise, when they take over another country. And one of them is spirit. You got to break the spirit of people. So you take the religion or you change the religion.

Rouzie Hassanova Yes. Yes. Yes. That's the first that has to go yet. Yes.

Annie Collins And the thing about names. It's so, so crucial. My dad who came out from Scotland had this little saying which I didn't

understand for decades, which was 'It's a wise child knows its own father'. Interesting. And your name is gone. Who are you?



Annie Collins & Rouzie (photo: Adrienne Martyn)

Rouzie Hassanova Well, they knew that with Muslim religion the name is the one of the biggest and, you know, kind of things that if they take away, that really breaks them or breaks the unity within the community. Because in Muslim religion, this is what I know from my grandparents and my parents, if you change your name, then Allah on the other

side when you die doesn't know who you are. So you can't be judged. You can't be tried, as you say. So Allah would not know if you should go to heaven or hell, which means you're stuck forever in the in-between.

And that's the worst nightmare for Muslim people. They'd rather be in hell if they'd been, you know, bad people than in the middle, stuck forever, not knowing where they're going. So the names, it had such a big importance, like bigger than losing your life. A lot of people lost their lives over the change of their names. The film could have been even more dramatic and so on, but I didn't want to put such an emphasis on it because I wanted to make a film for a family audience and I wanted people to understand, not to be isolated or see it as some sort of propaganda or anything like that. So I was very, very careful how I portrayed that.

Annie Collins I understand that you did run into some trouble at some stage while you were filming, because some of the people around whom you were filming thought you were making propaganda.

Rouzie Hassanova Yes. Yeah. Of course, everyone's open to having their own opinions. And for some people, probably it's seen

as a controversial film because it does reveal Muslim people as human. But this is why I wanted to make it. And we were doing a night shoot. And it was in one of the big scenes in the party secretary's kind of office. And it was 2 o'clock in the morning, I think. The mayor of the village next door decided to come over and threaten us and tell us to stop shooting because they were against what we were doing: this film should never have been made. And because people were fearful of misrepresentation or, because what happened was during communism there were few stages of changing the names of the Muslim community.

So we started off from the 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s. And because there were quite a few people and they were doing it strategically one by one, by hiring their own people to do it. So they were smart about it.

But a lot of the Muslim community, because now, 60, 70 years later, a lot of the Muslim people have now converted back to Christian religion. So they've felt that I was trying to make a film now against them or shaming them, which wasn't the case at all. So it was very difficult to try and explain that I wasn't doing that. It was it's actually a very family story. I'm keeping it close to my family because that's what happened to them. And I wanted to show something that I'm very proud of, of my culture and my family.



Annie & Rouzie (photo:
Adrienne Martyn)

Annie Collins I think that's one of the things which I feel about the film, is that it's very authentic and you don't get that authenticity unless you are a person of that culture, because the authenticity doesn't come from the big stories and the big speeches, it comes from the tiny details of family life.

And only somebody who knows and comes from that culture actu-

ally understand which details are the important things that give you the clues.

Rouzie Hassanova I mean, that's right. But I have to admit it took a lot of cast and crew encouragement because I feared that there will be a lot of backlash. I mean, I've experienced discrimination, racism myself. And so I was very scared. Even at financing stage we had a lot of people against the movie. They misread the script. There was a lot of things said in public that shouldn't have been said. But we just tried to rise above it. But my producer [was] Gergana Dankova.

You know, it's very difficult when you're trying to make an authentic film and you're a first time filmmaker and you're a woman and everyone is looking at you and everyone is questioning you and saying, are you going to do something that will misrepresent my country or my people? And are you going to offend me? And then, you know, it took a lot of encouragement. I needed encouragement from the cast. And thank God they were with us on the journey because they were very dedicated. And being professional actors they they were the ones who inspired me to speak the dialect in the film.

Annie Collins So you had written in what language?

Rouzie Hassanova In a clear, a little literary, kind of Bulgarian, which is not the language they speak in the mountains. In the mountains they speak a bit of a mix of Turkish and Bulgarian. It's kind of strange. Yeah.

Annie Collins So when did that change occur?

Rouzie Hassanova Two days before the shoot. (Laughter.) So this is what I'm saying: I didn't have the guts to write it like that because it wouldn't have gone through the financing process. I knew that and I didn't have the guts to direct it like that. But it took the actors to say, "Hold on. Let's do this right." And I was like, "Yes, why am I

not doing this right? Why am I even thinking about getting them to speak clean Bulgarian when they don't in the mountains?"

Annie Collins So it's like these two these two languages, there's two versions of the script. There's a script that the funders can read and give you money for.



Annie & Rouzie (photo: Adrienne Martyn)

Rouzie Hassanova Yeah.

Annie Collins And there's a script that actually you shoot.

Rouzie Hassanova Yeah.

Annie Collins And in many ways they shouldn't be the same script.

Rouzie Hassanova Well, in our situation, yes. And also it took us almost five years for the project to get the money from Bulgaria because of that problem. We had a lot of... We faced a lot of difficulty in getting the money. And the only reason why we got 100,000 euros from the Bulgarian National Film Centre is because there was money left in the budget in 2015. And we were the next project on the list that just about made it. And so they called my producer and they said, right, we can't give you 700 that you wanted, but we can give you 100. Can you make it? And so then she called me and I said, "I think we can". And so then we I called some friends in Turkey and I offered them the Turkish rights and I said, I need another 25 so we can actually shoot the movie, because that's what we needed to actually go into production. And then that's why it took us two years to finish editing because we had nothing left. So we had to do it as and when and favours. And... You know.

Annie Collins Yeah, I know. (Laughter.) So you actually had a co-production with Poland?

Rouzie Hassanova Yeah. That was just equipment.

Annie Collins So, just equipment for the shoot.

Rouzie Hassanova Yeah. So we had four Polish guys arrive in a massive truck with all the camera, lighting, sound. It was all given to us. Well we had it for free, but of course that was part of the co-production agreement is that they will come in. But it was great because obviously we do not have money for any of the equipment...

Annie Collins That's pretty interesting that you you get a co-production with Poland.

Rouzie Hassanova It is very interesting because now they're kind of going a little bit the other way. They're becoming quite right and quite isolating to other cultures and religions. But, you know, we had we had the greatest luck of meeting these two producers that really liked the script and and the team behind really wanted to kind of be part of the experience and make something together, so...

Annie Collins I wanted to ask you a little bit more about the cast and directing them, etc., because for for me, the performances that are up on screen are faultless.

Rouzie Hassanova I see a lot of mistakes, but anyway...

Annie Collins That's not just really great actors. You can direct great actors really badly and come up with a heap of what you don't want. It's also director.

Rouzie Hassanova Well. Thank you. I was very conscious that I wanted the actors to feel like they were one of the people in the village. So three days or four days before the shoot, I had them stay with some locals. And I had them separate, in different rooms. And I had them basically do exactly what the locals were doing, going to pick the tobacco, milking cows, scything the hay, you know, loading the trucks. You know, every single thing that is in the movie, they did it. And at first they were a little bit uncertain because in

Bulgaria, they've never really done such an exercise before. But for me, it was very important that it looks authentic on screen. And they loved it. And maybe this is the reason why they then encouraged me to change the language because they spent that time. And they started seeing how easy it was, an important part of the life, how people spoke. So...

Annie Collins That's a process that you put them through.

Rouzie Hassanova Yeah.

Annie Collins Which was quite unusual I take it, for going onto a film set.

Rouzie Hassanova It was, especially because we didn't have any money. So it was unusual. They didn't expect it. They felt out of comfort, their comfort zone, because these are guys...everyone in the movie is incredibly famous in Bulgaria. So they, they're like stars. So they didn't really expect any of that kind of living in someone's house with basics like not even proper toilets, you know. And just kind of with the animals. But they loved it at the same time. They loved it because it was different.

Annie Collins Is your background from one of those sorts of villages?

Rouzie Hassanova Yeah, I'm basically one of those little girls that was in the tobacco fields. It's the same village that I grew up. And that's the house, we shot in the same house of my granddad. Everything in the movie is pretty much one to one with what I remember from back then.

Annie Collins More authenticity isn't it?

Rouzie Hassanova Well, I was very proud. I remember being on the tobacco fields when I was four or five years old and it was so hot and I was so tired because we had to get up at 4 o'clock in the

morning to go there really early. And, you know, when you're a kid, you want to play. But I had to do all this work and I was praying for rain so I can just kind of sit and not do anything. But, you know, at the same time, I remember all the songs. I remember how people got together. And they were always some sort of...

Everything was connected with music in a funny way. We sang songs when we were happy and we sang songs when we were very sad. And so for me, it's something that I grew up with and I really wanted to show to the whole of Bulgaria to see, because when I ...when the summer was over, I was back at school and that was in the middle of Bulgaria. And my classmates didn't know what I was up to. And and and I felt different, but I couldn't really explain. So, yeah, I just basically wanted to tell everyone how proud I am of who I am. Yeah.

Annie Collins So if you come from a wee village, that village we saw, how on earth did you start making films? It's not the easiest sort of thing to do.

Rouzie Hassanova Well, no. Well, so long story. But don't know how to say it short. I applied when I was 18. I applied for a lot of universities. A lot of Bulgarian universities. International universities. Because I spoke English, I went to a special kind of course, to speak, to learn English and special school, to get really fluent. And I wanted, I really wanted to study, you know, a world class kind of education, to have that. But when an opportunity came that one university in London offered me a position, a place, I jumped at it because... my name is Muslim. So at the time, I felt that I didn't have the same opportunities as my classmates if I stayed.

The option of leaving and trying somewhere else like the U.K. was amazing. And I felt instantly welcomed. And nobody cared. Nobody nobody cared about my name or the fact that I had a Muslim background. Everyone was like, just come and do this. And I now felt very included. I instantly found friends. And not that I didn't have

friends in Bulgaria. I did. But for my future, I felt that was the best opportunity because my family, you know, they were repressed. And so they pushed me out of the door, basically. And then film.

Film took a lot of time. I would say eight to nine years, but it's something that I wanted to try. And I don't know, I guess I'm a little bit crazy that I always make films even though I never have money, but it just started off with a short, going to university, which got a distinction. And then I got encouraged to keep going. And then I made another short. And then another one. And then another one. And then the feature took about nine years. So a long time.

Annie Collins Is it nine years for one film? I mean, it's not unheard of here in this country either. But, so. (Laughter.). But it's it's it's a huge patch of your life to put in to put into one thing but that you put into this film, that's...

Rouzie Hassanova I mean, I, you know, when you start making something, you never think it's going to take that long. You always think, Oh, we'll make it. And it's going to be straight out and it's going to have a life, and so on. But I was really passionate about telling this movie, and there was a lot of people, of course, encouraging me to make it into a thriller, into an action. And all sorts.

Annie Collins You need a car chase.

Rouzie Hassanova Yeah, I know. Next one. But it wasn't the kind of film I wanted to make, actually. I was trying to stay very close to a Turkish director who is one of my biggest influences. And his name is Semih Kaplanoglu. And so I was going for that kind of very poetic, but also like very authentic. And I wanted to basically show something that was real and not fake.

Annie Collins One of the things that just grabs me about **Radiogram** is a couple of things. It's how you had figured out the essence of what information you want to seem to give. But the most

important thing that you've figured is what emotion you want to give with the information. And that's, that's that's a quality not many filmmakers have.



Annie & Rouzie (photo:
Adrienne Martyn)

Rouzie Hassanova Well, there were a few occasions that I can recall where, because of that, because I was a little bit obsessive about it. There were some some scenes that we reshot three times and there were some scenes that we did 17 takes. On one camera set up. So that's obsessiveness, because I

was so... I really did not want melodrama. And I didn't want over the top performance. And sometimes the actors took ages to get into the rhythm. And of course, there's a lot of other distractions, sometimes planes are flying above or someone's phone rings and it's Oh! And then I've got to reset and reset and... But that's my passion. If I'm doing something, I want to do it right. And so I'll keep trying until I get the best take. And and hopefully then someone like you can fix it if I haven't got it. (Laughter.)

But I must say, if it wasn't for my editor, the film would have been completely different. So editors take a lot of credit for it. And I've worked. So I started working with a Polish editor at the beginning and it was very clear he just didn't get the emotion that I was after. He cut the movie like a tele-feature. And I literally cried and I said, this is not the film I shot. And so then I, then we had to stop, because we had no money. And then suddenly I had to find a new editor. And I found this amazing lady, Natasha Westlake, in London, who we didn't pay a lot. We did it over the weekends. I was heavily pregnant. But she got it. She got the music and the emotion and and we didn't spend a lot of time, in fact, because I left her to do it.

Annie Collins Oo, that's interesting.

Rouzie Hassanova But from then on, I knew. I knew. I knew that we'd got a movie. I knew that I did it OK. Like it wasn't all lost.

Annie Collins And the interesting thing, eh, that that combination of people who do get it and then the film itself talks back to you and tells you it's in the right hands and you don't have to run around worrying about it so long as you just take your time and sit and look and listen at what's going on.

Rouzie Hassanova And then being open to editors talking to you, because one third of the script is actually not even in the movie. So it was heavily edited. It was heavily edited in post.

Annie Collins I was going to ask you about it because the other thing that really grabs me about it is the sparseness of it. It's almost shorthand in some ways, and it takes a lot of guts to cut a film like that. To leave off the bits and pieces where people walk indoors and outdoors and, you know, get themselves from one place to another and how did they get there and why are they doing that and all this sort of stuff? And people want to have it all explained, but actually, they don't need it. Yes they're in a truck. Somebody gave them a lift and they're in a truck. They get there.

Rouzie Hassanova Well, that's how that helps when you have an editor like Natasha, who was just exactly saying those things to me. She was like, you don't need to explain it. Don't worry about it. They will get it. Trust your film. Trust your vision. And and that constant kind of reminder was amazing because you do doubt yourself. You've written that script millions of times over and over and over. I could... I could recite every single word on it. And you see every single cut. And and so you you do see only the mistakes. You don't see the good stuff. And so, yeah, it helps other people being there, encouraging you and helping you through the way.

Annie Collins Have you ever cut a film with that sort of sharpness before? With that brevity?

Rouzie Hassanova No, no. That was my first time, yeah.

Annie Collins Well, that must have been very exciting for you.

Rouzie Hassanova Yes, it was it was very challenging, but it was good. It was a good challenge, you know. It was very healthy. I learnt a lot.

Annie Collins Yes. It's always the nice thing about working on a film isn't it. It's not just what you give to it. It's what you get back.

Rouzie Hassanova Yeah.

Annie Collins Yeah. One thing that I have been thinking about because I've actually watched it twice in the last two days now and it's a thing about when you're from that place and you are you are pulling up these these details that give you the authenticity and really tell your story with that sort of brevity. Somewhere along the line, you actually have to know yourself. And you have to turn and look inside yourself.

Rouzie Hassanova I don't know what you mean, but...

Annie Collins In order to know those things, you have to have really examined yourself.

Rouzie Hassanova Oh, yeah. And especially my family. I had to examine my family and that was not easy at all. And some hate me for it. But, you know, it's, it's interesting because even the family, it's not... You know, in Muslim culture, we are quite humble or anyway, the Pomak people in the village in that kind of community, they're very humble people.

So when it came to like premieres and events and speaking and stuff like that, they didn't really want to be part of it. And and because

they didn't want the kind of how do you say, to draw attention. But, yeah, it was challenging to talk to them and to ask the hard questions so I could be truthful, especially because the bad guy Serahev, is a Pomak. He is like the Muslim guy that turned Christian, that then betrayed his own people. And that is something that you know, it happened. It was historically correct. But it's not something people were easy to talk about. And weren't happy to admit that they have people like that within them.

Annie Collins It's a terrible exposure.

Rouzie Hassanova Yeah. Yeah.

Annie Collins Hard stuff. Hmmm. The sound work on it. It is a beautiful soundtrack on it, and I'm not just talking about the use of music. Music in itself is a simple element in many ways. It's the knitting of the richness of the sound behind the music. It may be what I'm thinking of are actually composed elements.

Rouzie Hassanova They are. Yeah.

Annie Collins But the knitting of it altogether, it is a beautiful soundtrack. Who was doing the sound design? Was that Polish?

Rouzie Hassanova Well, again, we had a very similar experience with the sound when we had a Polish company start. And then I had to make a very difficult decision. And, you know, again, I just felt like I couldn't find the right people to work with at the beginning. And that makes it really hard for producers, for me and for everyone involved and for the co-production, of course, that became slightly tricky towards the end because of it.

But they just, again, didn't get the movie. The team in Poland, they added so much sound, so many effects that actually it was laughable. It felt like a farm movie and not a drama. And I just couldn't believe it. And then and then I had to take that away from them and again,

find a very amazing group of young, well, not young, young like me, I guess, but sound design guys that did it for very little money and they did the whole sound mix as well. So they were incredible. They did it in literally one month, but that's working weekends because we didn't have the money. So it was incredible. They recorded everything in their little tiny studio. They knew exactly what I wanted. And again, I hardly even went there because by then my daughter was born. So if I went, she had to come with me and all that.

Annie Collins I would have felt very, very torn if I was in that situation. Twice you'd had critical stages of the film totally misinterpreted. And then when you do get somebody who looks like they get it and can do it, you're actually away. You leave it in their hands. I don't know if I'd have the courage to do that.

Rouzie Hassanova Well, I mean, they give you a first cut. You have to allow an editor and you have to allow a sound team to have a go at it first. Otherwise, there's no point if you're gonna be there dictating, telling everyone what to do. So. You just know instantly when they give you the first version of their version of the film that they've seen, you just know. It's like that that that easy.

Annie Collins So your process there was to just like put the footage in Natasha's hands, perhaps the assembly that you've been given, and you said 'Take it. See what you can do with it'.

Rouzie Hassanova Yeah. And give her two weeks and and then see the cut.

Annie Collins Come back and have a look.

Rouzie Hassanova Yeah. And then it's like you either get it or you don't. And you then start polishing, polishing, polishing it.

Annie Collins Yeah. Yeah. It's quite a quite a... when creativity works it's quite a loose business. How are we doing for time? Any questions from anybody?

audience question How was it received in Bulgaria?

Rouzie Hassanova So in Bulgaria, we had a small release because the cinemas didn't want to book it on a wide release. We had it on 10 screens. It was released. I mean, critically by the reviewers and stuff like that it was received very well because they they understood what I was trying to say. But we released in the hottest weekend, so it was bad timing. But it's done OK, I mean, for what it is for that kind of level of film. And, you know, it's not for everybody. It's not for the mass audience of Bulgaria. It did OK. And then it got released in Turkey. And I think it had a limited release in Poland as well.

audience question (inaudible, about scriptwriting)

Rouzie Hassanova Well, it's interesting with this example, because now I'm trying to write something else and I'm definitely doing something. You know I have a very different kind of structure of writing. With this particular story because it was a short and then the Scripteast Development Lab heard about it because we were nominated for this award. And then they just heard about the pitch. They heard the pitch and they just came and met me.

And we had a very quick coffee and they said 'This needs to be a feature'. And I just, I was a bit like, it can't be. I don't even know how to where to begin. And they said, 'Look, we give you, we'll extend the deadline for another two weeks if you can give us a feature film script. It doesn't have to be perfect. It's a development lab. Anyway, we'll help you develop it. Just give us a script, 90 pages.' (Laughter.) So, yeah.

So I took two weeks off my work and I sat down and... I didn't even write a treatment. I just wrote the biggest probably pile of crap. But they just saw the potential of it and then accepted it. And it took about, well, it took eight years of development. A lot of drafts, 14 drafts. I mean, it took a lot of development labs. It took script

editors. It took... We had financing for development from Media, [now called Creative Europe]. We went to EAVE, we went we went to so many events just to try and get as much feedback as possible. And I was very green in this writing process. But it was an incredible school.

Annie Collins And then you dropped a third of it.

Rouzie Hassanova And then I dropped a third of it. (Laughter.)

Audience — inaudible question about New Zealand filmmaking

Rouzie Hassanova Here is very different. (Laughter.) Number one. Europe is very crowded. It's very competitive. You are up against thousands of film makers, super, super talented. And so, well, it's just so much harder to get finance. Incredibly hard. Here I haven't really started doing much. We're just doing a little short now with Fran Carney over there, which we are prepping for a May shoot. And it's a kind of cute little story set here in New Zealand about immigrants again. But so far, it's been a completely different experience. It's because everyone is so welcoming and and people are so happy to be helping and giving you advice and... or being involved in the project. It just feels, it literally feels like a breeze, to me anyway. You don't have to beg and ask... I mean it just feels so much easier. But I'll tell you, in a few months, if that changes. (Laughter.)



Cushla Parekowhai joins in
(photo: Adrienne Martyn)



Lorna Kanavatoa closes the event (photo: Adrienne Martyn)

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2020: AVA DUVERNAY'S '13TH' AT PARLIAMENT

Ava DuVernay's *13th* screened at New Zealand's Parliament on 13 July 2020. This post has two parts. The first was written as background before the screening. The second includes some photographs from the event and links to audio recordings from it.

PART 1: SCREENING BACKGROUND



Ava DuVernay's *13th* will screen at New Zealand's Parliament, in the Beehive Theatre, on 13 July, as one of the #DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa pop-up screenings. A documentary about criminalisation and the myths that have been perpetuated about black people in the United States, it resonates with the New Zealand experience, where

— thanks to colonisation — Māori are over-represented at every stage in the criminal justice system.

Misha Ketchell wrote recently that compared with Pākehā, Māori are six times more likely to be handcuffed, 11 times more likely to be subdued with pepper spray, six times more likely to be batoned, nine times more likely to have dogs set on them, ten times more likely to be tasered and nine times more likely to have firearms drawn against them by police.^a Over the past decade, two-thirds of all victims of fatal police shootings have been Māori or Pasifika.

For almost every category of crime, a Māori who is convicted is more likely to be sent to prison than someone who is not Māori. As a result, Māori, who are about 16 per cent of the population, make up more than 50 per cent of the prison population.

Māori women make up 65 per cent of New Zealand's female prison population, according to the most recent statistics I've seen.^b An estimated 74 per cent of them are mothers and 23,000 children have parents in prison.^c A further grim reality is that most people in the criminal justice system have been abused: 53 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men in prison have experienced a sexual assault and 77 per cent of all people in prison have been victims of violence.

A very recent Act of Parliament restored prisoners' right to vote, but only if their sentence is less than three years.^d

Green MP Jan Logie will host this event in association with #DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa. Nicole Inskeep will introduce '13th', and after it screens experts Awatea Mita and Julia Whaipooti

^a <https://theconversation.com/black-lives-matter-outrage-must-drive-police-reform-in-aotearoa-new-zealand-too-139965>; <https://cipscis.github.io/charter/app/tor.html>

^b <https://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/JDTTK8SMWJICVPQY3GCZ/full>

^c <https://www.renews.co.nz/manatika-watch>

^d <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/419768/voting-rights-restored-for-prisoners-serving-less-than-three-years>

will join Jan to discuss local mass incarceration and the work of transforming the justice system in New Zealand.

(If you're in Wellington and would like an invitation, please email 13th.screening.at.Parliament@gmail.com.)



Ava DuVernay at work on '13th'

AVA DUVERNAY AND 13TH

Ava DuVernay grew up in Compton, California, where there was 'a lot of police aggression'^e and 'prison was always present'^f and majored in African-American Studies at university, where she learned about the historical context of her lived experience. She's said: 'This is a topic that I've been passionate about and always have been...[it]has been integrated into so much of my filmmaking work'.^g Her second feature film, *Middle of Nowhere*, which won the Directing Award for U.S. Dramatic Film at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival, is about a woman grappling with her husband's incarceration and how that affects the family. In her acclaimed TV series *Queen Sugar*, directed entirely by women across seven seasons there are storylines about incarceration.

When Netflix approached Ava to make a documentary and gave her the freedom to do whatever she wanted, she seized the opportunity

^e <https://www.vogue.com/article/ava-duvernay-oscar-nomination-oscars-so-male>

^f <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUgQdpSDSN8>

^g <https://www.vogue.com/article/ava-duvernay-oscar-nomination-oscars-so-male>

to interrogate the black experience of incarceration more deeply. *13th* was the result: the title refers to the idea of using prisoners for profit, enabled by the 13th amendment to the American Constitution, which abolished slavery throughout the United States in 1865 and ended involuntary servitude, *except* as a punishment for conviction of a crime. *13th* was nominated for many awards, including the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature, and it won many, among them Best Documentary at the British Academy Film Awards, several Primetime Emmy Awards and a Peabody Award for Excellence.

Ava has said that —

...it was a challenge to take generations and generations of oppression and try to make that manageable and palatable, something that folks can drink in, get into their bloodstream, and then actually feel it and *understand* it. The process was very intimate, detailed, painstaking. This is an editor's showcase, really. My editor, Spencer Averick, is the only editor I've ever worked with, from my very first shorts, on every single film and every commercial, and we've done docs together before. We came into this project knowing that these issues are important, and that this was definitely the biggest thing we've ever tackled. The cutting-room floor is full of sequences about different parts of this web that we were trying to untangle. This could definitely have been a six-hour miniseries.^h

She's also stated that—

[*13th* is] something that is perfect for Netflix, because I don't think people would ever go to the theater for it — it's too public, it's too intimate, it's too interior, it's too [much about] grappling with our demons.ⁱ

^h <https://www.filmcomment.com/article/ava-duvernay-interview-the-13th/>

ⁱ <https://www.vogue.com/article/ava-duvernay-oscar-nomination-oscars-so-male>

But I'm delighted that Netflix has now made *13th* freely available for groups to screen, without charge, because in the intimate Beehive Theatre we can come together as a small community to watch and discuss the film and its relevance to the webs that need to be untangled in New Zealand.

Warm thanks to Ava DuVernay and to her producer Howard Barish who so kindly explained to me what was possible.



Thanks too, to LMC, the event's funder, to our photographer Adrienne Martyn,^j and to Barbara Ann O'Leary, catalyst for the global #DirectedByWomen project.^k

MASS INCARCERATION AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN NEW ZEALAND

The New Zealand government has pledged to reduce the prison population by 30 per cent in 15 years and is working towards that, with some success.^l It has also established Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata, Safe and Effective Justice, a cross-sector initiative set up to help guide the transformation of the criminal justice system and create a safer New Zealand.^m

Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata is developing long term solutions to:

^j <https://www.adriennemartyn.com/>

^k <https://directedbywomen.com/>

^l <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/30/the-man-on-a-mission-to-get-new-zealands-maori-out-of-prison>

^m <https://safeandeffectivejustice.govt.nz/>

- keep communities safe
- address pathways to offending, so that we can respond better to criminal behaviour
- deliver better outcomes for everyone who experiences the justice system.

There's also the Department of Corrections' *Wahine e rere ana ki te pae hou — Women's Strategy 2017–2021*ⁿ. It provides interventions and services that meet women's needs and manages them in ways that are trauma-informed, empowering, and reflect the importance of relationships to women. Its focus underpins Home Ground, a visionary and Creative New Zealand-funded programme designed by and for its participants, using the arts and creativity to address the challenges faced by women in New Zealand's justice system and their whānau.^o

But there are strong arguments for more radical changes, like those recorded in *Ināia Tōnu Nei — The Time is Now: We Lead, You Follow*, a report released almost exactly a year ago, which captures the kōrero (discussion) at a national Hui (meeting) for Māori, held in Rotorua to discuss Māori experiences with the justice system.^p

As someone with limited knowledge of this topic, I found the report very clear and easy to read. And totally persuasive as a proposed strategy for achieving justice for all, when read against the

ⁿ https://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/newsletters_and_brochures/corrections_works/2017/corrections_works_sept_2018/wahine_e_rere_ana_ki_te_pae_hou_womens_strategy_2017-2021

^o <https://www.homegroundnz.com/>

^p <https://safeandeffectivejustice.govt.nz/about-this-work/hui-maori/> https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/650d11250274a5a48eb49e13/656ff4a7742682775f85592d_Inaia-Tonu-Nei-Hui-Maori-English-2019.pdf

background of inspiring Māori-led initiatives in contexts I'm more familiar with, which have been great news for **all** New Zealanders.

It isn't often enough acknowledged I think — that although dispossessed and under-resourced by the Crown, their Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi partner for 180 years, Māori lead strongly in many all-New Zealand sectors, most recently in initiatives that have kept our communities safe during the COVID emergency.

Māori also lead in many cultural institutions. For instance, at Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand Arapata Hakiwai is Kaihautū | Māori Co-leader; Marten Rabarts is Festival Director | Kaiwhakatere of the New Zealand International Film Festival Whānau Marama; Chris Szekely leads the Alexander Turnbull Library, the national research library; Tanea Heke is Tumuaki | Director Toi Whakaari the national drama school; Honiana Love is Chief Executive | Tumu Whakarae at Ngā Taonga, our audiovisual archive.

In the screen sector as a whole, Māori leadership has been outstanding. These facts are well-known:

- Seven of the ten all-time top-grossing New Zealand feature films domestically are by and/or about Māori;
- Internationally, Taika Waititi is one of our best-known filmmakers and many more Māori contribute strongly at a global level, including Māori women like Ainsley Gardiner, Libby Hakaraia and Chelsea Winstanley, thanks to their participation in major festivals like Sundance, imagineNative, Toronto and Berlin, their increased presence within other parts of the wider industry outside New Zealand and their warm relationships with indigenous filmmakers;

and

- Although under-resourced via government funding, vibrant Māori-led film businesses like Piki Films and Brown Sugar Apple Grunt, and at least one non-profit — Māoriland — go from strength to strength.

I don't think this happened by accident. Instead, it happens because of the way Māori screen workers practice, which isn't always recognised and appreciated by the rest of us. For instance, Māori researchers Rachel Wolfram and Ella Henry found that Māori women screen workers were embedded in the community and drew strength from their collective social identity, (unlike non-Māori women, who focused largely on 'the job' and how their screen work supported and advanced their individual career trajectories). They were also committed to visual sovereignty, determined —

to gain the right to tell their stories in their own voices with passion and authenticity...their leadership struggles [were] interwoven in histories of colonisation and the struggle for political, social and economic justice.⁹

Being embedded in the community means Māori filmmakers make a profound investment in nourishing people and relationships, using highly effective and long-established cultural practices like *manaakitanga*, the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others. To give just one example, Ainsley Gardiner, when producing Taika Waititi's *Boy* (2010) — which achieved the second-highest-ever gross for a New Zealand film at the local box office — drew on

⁹ Wolfram, R. & Henry, E. (2015). Wahine Toa, Māori women warrior leaders in the screen industry. In S. Madsen, F. Wambura Ngunjiri, K. Longman & C. Cherrey (eds.), *Women and leadership around the world* (pp. 269–286, at 275). Charlotte NC: International Leadership Association, Information Age Publishing.

elements that are shared across many Māori enterprises within and outside the screen sector:

I've always had this idea that making films should feel like being at school camp or a family reunion where every aspect of being is catered to. Eating well, sleeping well, being with good people... With *Boy*, my goal was to develop a way of working and shooting that suited people's families... So people were welcome to bring their spouses and children. We had a daycare set up. I had my own kids there, with Tammy and Mum.^r

It's my understanding Ainsley Gardiner, like and with other Māori filmmakers, has continued to develop this way of working through a series of successful features that include *The Breaker Upperers* (on Netflix), *Wāru* and the forthcoming *Cousins*, an adaptation of Patricia Grace's classic novel.

If we work on a Māori-led project, we all benefit from these practices and the associated fun and laughter that maintain wellbeing and enhance creativity. We also benefit because they ensure that bullying and sexual harassment are less likely to flourish. I've heard many many stories about bullying and sexual harassment in the local screen industry and New Zealand is now in the midst of #metoo revelations, but not one of the stories I've heard has been tied to a Māori-led project.

If we have have some other kind of relationship to the work, including our participation as audiences that enjoy it at home or elsewhere we benefit too, from its quality as entertainment.

I and many others have also experienced having 'every aspect of being' catered to at Māoriland's annual film festival, also an outstanding and rare example of leadership in programming,

^r https://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501119&objectid=10633570

because at least half the films selected are directed by women, every year.

And where we're fortunate enough to be invited to participate within a Māori framework in other screen-related contexts, we also benefit. For instance, at an all-comers consultation about the government's Screen Sector Strategy last year there were few Māori amongst us. But within a day led by a Māori and structured according to Māori values we worked towards a collective goal in a safe and productive environment. There's no doubt (for me) that because the day began with formalities that included prayer and each one of us greeting every single other participant with respect for them and for their ancestors, our shared wellbeing was enhanced. As a result our respectful and energetic engagement continued throughout the day.

Because these aspects of the powerful Māori contribution to and investment in the industry are slightly 'hidden' to most of us most of the time, we probably don't adequately recognise and acknowledge them and the full significance of the leadership involved. Māori-led screen projects have economic, social and globally transformative potential if a more appropriate level of government funding were offered. But that hasn't happened yet. (What if the most recent post-COVID major funding allocation for the screen sector had included a substantial and autonomous Māori component?)

With all this in mind, back to *Ināia Tōnu Nei — The Time is Now: We Lead, You Follow* and another kind of possible Māori investment in our collective well-being.

Ināia Tōnu Nei — The Time is Now: We Lead, You Follow is based on time-tested research and practice. It hasn't come from nowhere. It acknowledges that —

...over many generations, Māori have provided significant kōrero, research, evidence and commentary explaining a Te Ao Māori [the

Māori world's] view on justice reform'. It also acknowledges 'the ongoing work, advocacy and leaders who have sacrificed their lives to improve the wellbeing of Māori. The aim of this report is to complement the ongoing work and research in this area.

Lawyer Khylee Quince is one of those who've undertaken this ongoing work. She's 'consistently surprised, and quite horrified, at how little Pākehā New Zealanders know about us. How little they understand about how we think. About the way that we do things. About our priorities and views on how the world should be organised'. As she says —

...there were laws here before the colonisers arrived...We sorted out disputes differently. We had fully formed systems of law and social regulation.^s

Why not acknowledge the strengths of these valuable systems and support Māori leadership by prioritising well-tested Māori practices within the justice system, practices that will offer Māori (and the rest of us) better lifelong health and wellbeing, outside prisons?

These practices are simple to understand, appreciate and advocate for, I think. Especially (but not only) if we've had some experience of Māori leadership in other contexts. From my knowledge of Māori screen sector practices that prioritise relationships, for instance, I 'got it' when I heard Awatea Mita state that in the criminal justice context —

From a Māori perspective...it's about who caused the harm, who experienced the harm, how can we all collectively take responsibility for healing that harm. Are we as a society going to choose punishment or treatment, health or handcuffs... If we're serious

^s <https://e-tangata.co.nz/korero/khylee-quince-seeing-beyond-pakeha-law/>

about reducing harm and making our society safer, we would have rehab available wherever there's a District Court.^t

Ināia Tonu Mai makes two main recommendations for action, to take place within a Mana Ōrite system that puts Māori at all levels of decision-making—

- Immediately start to decolonise the justice system, to provide instant relief to processes that continue to harm Māori.
- Immediately start designing an intergenerational plan to reform the justice system. This includes starting work in areas such as constitutional reform, to ensure the reform of the justice system is enduring and reflects the commitment that the Crown made when signing Te Tiriti o Waitangi back in 1840.

When I read 'constitutional reform' I immediately thought of lawyer Moana Jackson and his work and was thrilled to see this in my timeline today.^u As always he lays it all out with a clarity that compels me.

There's lots to learn, and will be lots to watch and listen to on 13 July!

Many thanks, again, to Jan Logie for hosting this screening (the fifth #DirectedByWomen #Aotearoa screening in Parliament). And many thanks to Nicole, Awatea and Julia for their willingness to share their experience and thoughts with us.

^t <https://www.renews.co.nz/manatika-watch>

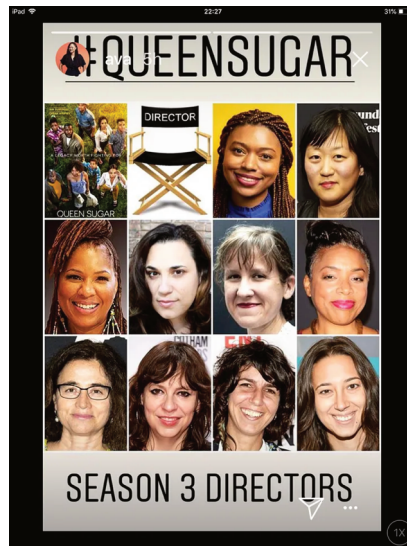
^u <https://x.com/shilokino/status/1276468275321298945>

MORE ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Ava DuVernay

Ava DuVernay is an American filmmaker, a writer, director, producer and film distributor, based in Los Angeles. As well as *13th*, her directorial work includes the historical drama *Selma*, and Disney's *A Wrinkle in Time*, which made her the highest-grossing black woman director in American box office history and the multi-award-winning *When They See Us*, based on the infamous case of The Central Park Five.

She also oversees production on her *Queen Sugar* and her OWN series *Cherish the Day*.



One of the things I most love about Ava DuVernay is her assertion that 'If your dream is only about you it's too small': her global leadership of the debates about inclusive practices and her exemplary commitment to inclusiveness on all her projects seem to be part of this. *Queen Sugar* is celebrated for employing an all-women director-

rial team over all four seasons, for instance. As well, Ava amplifies independent film by people of colour and women filmmakers of all kinds, globally, through her non-profit film collective Array. Among the films Array distributes is Heperi Mita's *Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen*.

She also sits on the advisory board of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and chairs the Prada Diversity Council.



I love it that Ava's not scared to go into difficult places and conversations and always seems to do so with grace and courage and clarity and good humour.

Another thing I love is her hope.

And one outcome I'd love from the upcoming screening is that it will help inspire realistic hope right here, for positive change in the justice system, led by Māori and cherished by us all.

. . .

Jan Logie

Jan Logie is a Green MP and Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Justice, a champion for people and families affected by domestic and sexual violence, and a tireless and highly effective worker for human rights for all, including prisoners right to vote.^v



Jan Logie with Wanuri Kahiu at the Parliamentary screening of
Wanuri's Rafiki

Among other activities, she's initiated a select committee inquiry into funding for specialist sexual abuse and social services, and introduced the Workplace Victims' Protection Act that gave people affected by domestic violence legal protection in the workplace. And, as Lorna Kanavatoa says, thinking of the environment as a person and a community, Jan's work there is vital, too. This is the fifth #directedbywomen #aotearoa screening Jan has hosted.

. . .

^v <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/419768/voting-rights-restored-for-prisoners-serving-less-than-three-years>

Nicole Inskeep



Nicole Inskeep

Nicole Inskeep is a New Zealand-based African American racial justice advocate. She is passionate about the need to pursue criminal justice reforms as the daughter of an incarcerated father who served over 20 years in prison. Before moving to New Zealand, Nicole volunteered as a youth mentor for several years within South Australian Indigenous Aboriginal communities. During her teenage years in the US,

Nicole was involved in a range of community youth outreach programmes aimed at advancing positive wellbeing outcomes for disadvantaged and marginalised African American youth. More recently, Nicole has been a powerful and influential voice in New Zealand's Black Lives Matter rallies in Wellington and continues to push for equality in all spaces despite the associated adversities.

Awatea Mita



Awatea Mita (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Pikiao) is currently a Criminology Honours student at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington. She works for RPA: the professional association representing the growing number of New Zealand providers of Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices. Awatea is a

passionate advocate for indigenous rights and incarcerated people. Her advocacy comes, in part, from lived experience of the criminal justice system.^w

. . .

^w <https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/28-11-2018/a-society-that-denies-the-incarcerated-a>

Julia Whaipooti



Screenshot from TVNZ
interview about NZ
Police's Armed Response
Team trial

Julia (Ngāti Porou) is a passionate advocate for systemic change in the criminal justice system and has worked in the Community Law movement as the National Māori Co-ordinator, lawyer and advocate and as a Senior Adviser in the Office of the Children's Commissioner. She was a member of the Government's Advisory Group for The Safe and Effective Justice Programme Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata, created to reform the criminal justice system and create a safer New Zealand.^x She is also the spokesperson for JustSpeak, a youth-powered movement for transformational change of criminal justice towards a fair, just and flourishing Aotearoa.^y

Last year, Julia led a delegation of young Māori to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York and presented an intervention calling for criminal justice reform. Julia has a deep understanding of the complex social justice issues that have not met the needs of children and young people entering the criminal justice system.

Julia believes in the power of young people's experiences and voices to be powerful agents for change. She is the proudest aunty to five and imagines an Aotearoa where her whanau, and children of future generations have an equal opportunity to imagine and reach their potential.

vote-is-a-society-stamping-on-human-rights and <https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/03-07-2020/the-human-stories-at-the-heart-of-a-national-crisis-in-criminal-justice/>

^x <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/key-initiatives/hapaitia-te-oranga-tangata/>

^y <https://www.justspeak.org.nz/>

Lorna Kanavatoa



Lorna Kanavatoa (far left) at Parliament's screening of **Radiogram**, with Annie Collins & Rouzie Hassanova (photo: Adrienne Martyn)

Lorna Kanavatoa is of Te Atiawa, Ngati Kahungunu, Niue Island and Papua New Guinea heritages. She is mana whenua here in the Wellington region and, as part of #directedby-women #aotearoa from the beginning, leads us in our Parliamentary screenings. As a former lecturer in Women's Studies at Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington, she taught Images of

Women & Women as Image-makers, Women in Society and team taught Oral History among other courses. In addition, Lorna was a Marae-based manager and lecturer at the University marae. She has been a Policy Analyst at the Ministry of Women's Affairs and currently is Project Coordinator at the Vakaola Pacific Community Health. Her team co-designed and produced education videos on Suicide Prevention with Tokelau and Niue Island families and community members.

PART 2: SCREENING RECORD

Our lovely photographer Adrienne Martyn wasn't available right through the screening, but documented the happy pre-screening meetup at Backbenchers and the introduction before the screening, in images like these.



Nicole Inskeep, Julia Whaipooti, Awatea Mita (photo: Adrienne Martyn)



Awatea and Annie Collins (photo: Adrienne Martyn)



Mairaro Kanavatoa and Lorna Kanavatoa (photo: Adrienne Martyn)

Soundtech kindly recorded the event in two parts.

The first part of the record (54 minutes) is the discussion with Jan,

Awatea Mita and Julia Whaipooti, followed by some closing remarks from Lorna Kanavatoa.^z



Lorna leads the way (photo: Adrienne Martyn)

The second part (21 minutes) includes the introductions, from Lorna Kanavatoa, Jan Logie and Nicole Inskeep.^{aa}



Jan speaks (photo: Adrienne Martyn)

^z <https://archive.org/details/discussion-13-july-2020/Opening+Speech+13+July+2020.mp3>

^{aa} <https://archive.org/details/discussion-13-july-2020/Discussion+13+July+2020.mp3>



Nicole introduces **13th** (photo: Adrienne Martyn)

2025: And then we went into lockdown again.

First published in *Wellywoodwoman* & @devt on *Medium*, 5 July 2020.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To all of you who you create and sustain these festivals and databases, often as volunteers, my love, admiration, gratitude and respect. You're amazing and you're an inspiration!

Many individuals around the globe have inspired and nourished my film activism in my own tiny corner, at the centre of my world, the far end of the world to so many others. As an activist character says in *Setting the Table* – a play by distinguished Aotearoa New Zealand writer Renée—

Look we're setting the table.

Right? All those women we know about and the hundreds we don't.

Well. They got the ingredients ready and cooked the dinner. And now we've got as far as setting the table. Oh I know it seems as though we'll never sit down to the dinner-party. Well maybe we won't. But we'll get the table ready.

Us and all the ones we don't know about.

Many thanks and much love to all of those I encountered virtually or IRL as they set the table, including—

Alexandra Hidalgo; Amanda Coles; Anita Ross; Anna Serner at the Swedish Film Institute; Ava DuVernay; Barbara Ann O'Leary; Becca Barnes; Belinde Ruth Stieve (*Schspin* blog!) ; Beti Ellerson; Briony

Kidd (*Stranger With My Face* fest!); CampbellX whose manifesto gave me strength early on; Chelsea Winstanley; Cheryl L. Bedford; Christine Leunens; CIMA, la Asociación de Mujeres Cineastas y de Medios Audiovisuales and its Compostela Declaration of 2010; Collectif 50/50; Darnell Hunt (those Writers Guild of America West diversity reports!); Deb Verhoeven; Deborah Jones; Debra Zimmerman of Women Make Movies; Destri Martino (The Director List *&* her classic short film *The Director*!); Ellen Tejle (the A-Rating!);

Film Festival Research Network;^a Francine Raveney and her peers at the European Women's Audiovisual Network and her policy work at Eurimages; Holly Tarquini (the F-Rating!); Jane Campion; Kate Kaminski (I miss the *Bluestocking* series!); Kay Armatage; Kyna Morgan (*HerFilm*!); Libby Hakaraia; Luísa Pécora; Maria Giese; Maria Judice; Martha Lauzen at the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film in San Diego with her patient persistence;

Melissa Silverstein (*Women & Hollywood*!)^b; the late, great Michele Amas (my beloved writing buddy!); Naomi McDougall Jones; Nasreen Alkhateeb; Niam Itani; Nicola Purvis; Patricia Watson of WIFTNZ; *Raising Films*;^c Rina Fraticelli; Ruth Harley; Ruth Torjussen (*You CANNES Not Be Serious!* Campaign in 2010!) Shaula Evans (no relation: superb writer support on Twitter!); Skadi Loist; So Mayer, whose manifesto also gave me strength when I needed it;^d Thuc Nguyen (the Bitch List! and much more!); Vaishnavi Sundar (*Women Making Films*!)^e.

Special thanks to *Women Make Waves Taiwan* for the cover image; to Gary Morris for the cover design, with support from Hamish

^a <http://www.filmfestivalresearch.org>

^b <https://womenandhollywood.com>

^c <https://www.raisingfilms.com>

^d <https://medium.com/womens-film-activism/sophie-mayers-activist-wisdom-c5bfd6fddc23>

^e <https://www.wmfindia.com/about>

Thompson and Lynne Ciochetto; to those who've been part of many iterations of Spiral, especially Bridie Lonie and Tilly Lloyd; to Mokopōpaki and Jacob Raniera, 'keeper of the house', for inspiring the latest version.^f

Many thanks also to those who helped Erica Duthie and me with Wellington's *Mahi Ata Mahi Abua: Women's Work in Film* way back in 2003, including the late Keri Hulme for gifting the name; and to Gaylene Preston for taking me all the way to the *Festival International de Films de Femmes* back in 2004, along with her *Perfect Strangers*.^g

And deep appreciation to everyone who's contributed to #Directed-ByWomen #Aotearoa: Hon. Grant Robertson and Jan Logie MP at NZ's Parliament and Raewyn Tate in Jan's office; legendary photographer Adrienne Martyn;^h Annie Collins; Cushla Parekowhai; Lorna Kanavatoa; and—

Alex Mackay; Annie Mein; Awatea Mita; Big Screen Symposium; Cathasaigh Ó Fiannachta; Catherine Fitzgerald; Ella Henry; Hanelle Harris; Hope Dickson Leach; Isabel Coixet;ⁱ Jackie McAuliffe; Jaimee Poipoi; Julia Whaipooti; Kanya Stewart; Kathleen Winter; Kathryn Bennett at Rialto Cinemas; LMC (the late Lynne Ciochetto, a kind and dedicated Spiral member for decades); Louise Hutt; Madeleine de Young; Melissa Clark-Reynolds; Nasreen Alkhatteeb; Ness Simons; NZ Women's Studies Association; Nicole Inskeep; Oriwa Hakaraia; Pachali Brewster; Penny Ehrhardt; Robin Murphy; Roseanne Liang, Rouzie Hassanova; Vicki Jackways; Wanuri Kahiu; WIFTNZ.

^f <https://gallery.mokopopaki.co.nz/tagged/thisjoyouschaoticplace>

^g <https://gaylenepreston.co.nz/perfect-strangers>

^h <https://adriennemartyn.com/work>

ⁱ <https://medium.com/women-filmmakers-interviews/isabel-coixet-8a800452221a>

2025: Spiral's warmest thanks to Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū and its librarian Tim Jones, for generously hosting our publications and creating a beautiful exhibition.

PUBLISHER & AUTHOR

PUBLISHER

Poet Heather McPherson founded Spiral Collectives in 1975. Spiral is a small artist-led registered charity (CC62215).

Perhaps best-known for publishing Keri Hulme's Booker Prize-winning *the bone people*, we educate about the storytelling practices and legacies of women and nonbinary people. We cherish these as much as we can — we awahi and tautoko and embrace and support them, with publications, exhibitions, events, moving image, websites and archives. And patience. We all work as volunteers.

Almost all of our out-of-print publications are available to read and download at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, without cost.^a

We welcome and deeply appreciate donations to our running costs, in our 38-9026-0058551-00 SPIRAL COLLECTIVES TRUST account. If you donate and then send us your name and email, we

^a <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/about/library/spiral>

will send you a receipt you can use to claim a charitable donation tax benefit.

AUTHOR

Dr Marian Evans, a Spiral member, wrote the Aotearoa New Zealand entry for Susan Liddy's *Women in the International Film Industry: Policy, Practice and Power* (2021).^b

^b <https://www.indiewire.com/2014/03/heroines-of-cinema-why-dont-more-women-make-movies-marian-evans-on-bridging-the-gap-between-theory-and-practice-28702/>