

*a film by caroline berler*



**A HISTORY OF QUEER CINEMA**  
*from the women who made it happen*

**BARBARA HAMMER · SU FRIEDRICH · ROSE TROCHE  
CHERYL DUNYE · B. RUBY RICH · YORUBA RICHEN  
DESIREE AKHAVAN & MORE**

DIRECTED BY CAROLINE BERLER PRODUCED BY CAROLINE BERLER & REBECCA BENSON CO-PRODUCER ROSE VINCELLI GUSTINE  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MELANIE MCLEAN BROOKS EDITED BY CAROLINE BERLER

*dykescameraaction.com*

WMM WOMEN MAKE MOVIES



Frameline  
Completion Fund

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## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I grew up in San Antonio, Texas, in the late 90s. Back then I didn't know any openly gay adults in my community, so I looked to the movies for role models. Luckily I came of age just in time to discover the amazing queer films that were coming out then—what I now realize was a watershed moment for queer cinema. These movies with lesbian characters at their center, which I discovered in the aisles of my local video store, were the greatest source of comfort to me, and gave me hope for my future. I probably watched *But I'm A Cheerleader* and *High Art* 5,000 times.

Fast forward to New York City, 2016: I was earning my MFA in Social Documentary Film at the School of Visual Arts, and in search of the perfect thesis project to which I would dedicate the next several years of my life. I was doing some major soul searching, trying to figure out what I truly cared about.

Then, on Christmas Eve, I serendipitously ended up at dinner at the home of Rose Troche and learned all about her body of work and important contributions to queer cinema—including *Go Fish* and *The L Word*—and I was thoroughly impressed! After that night, I asked Rose if I might interview her about her life, career, and her experiences as an LGBTQ activist. As soon as Rose and I started talking I knew there was a whole other side to the films that I loved so much growing up: the women behind the camera. I knew I had found the perfect film to make. From there, I continued to find more of the amazing filmmakers who contributed to this history, and the film took on a life of its

Most people don't know this history. In early preview screenings in New York and LA, I've been thrilled to discover how enthusiastically general audiences respond to these women directors and their unique sensibilities, stories and ways of seeing. There aren't enough films directed by women. Hopefully this film will encourage future generations of women to go out and make films and seek out films by, for and about women. Lastly, *DYKES, CAMERA, ACTION!* celebrates the power of film, with its ability to make us laugh, cry, transport us through storytelling and to inspire action.

Caroline M Berler



# DYKES, CAMERA, ACTION!

A history of queer cinema from the women who made it happen.

## SYNOPSIS:

Lesbians didn't always get to see themselves on screen. But between Stonewall, the feminist movement, and the experimental cinema of the 1970s, they built visibility, and transformed the social imagination about queerness. Filmmakers Barbara Hammer, Su Friedrich, Rose Troche, Cheryl Dunye, Yoruba Richen, Desiree Akhavan, Vicky Du, film critic B. Ruby Rich, Jenni Olson, and others share moving and often hilarious stories from their lives and discuss how they've expressed queer identity through film.

This feature-length documentary, covers the history of queer cinema from the early days as a marginalized sub-culture, to the 1990s which saw the rise of New Queer Cinema, up to the present. The film examines the ways that women directors have contributed to this genre and emphasizes the role that the media plays in representation of sexuality and gender, underscoring the power that film has to shape our perceptions of one another. Visually, this documentary comes to life onscreen through compelling and intimate original interviews intercut with emotionally-charged archival footage, photographs, ephemera, inspired music, and film clips.

This documentary is not narrated; the filmmakers tell their own stories, blending personal experiences with a narrative about the evolution of lesbian cinema. *DYKES, CAMERA, ACTION!* brings together humor, pathos, and political/historical moments to form the film's arc: the larger history of the gay liberation movements in the context of cinema.



*Barbara Hammer, pioneer of lesbian cinema.*

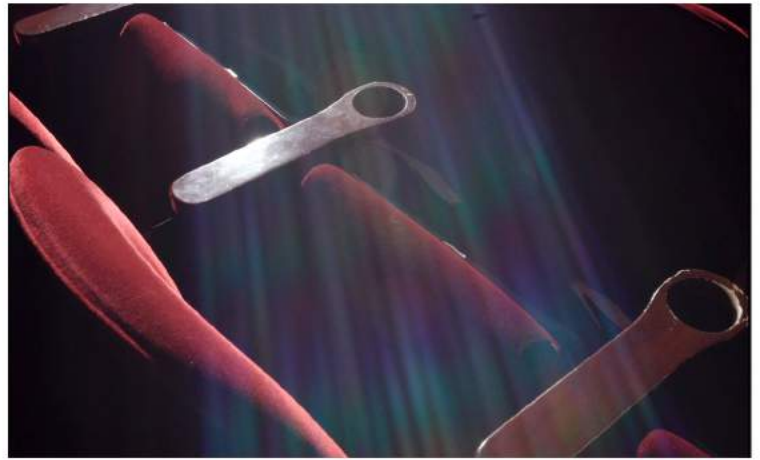


## DIRECTOR PRODUCER & EDITOR

CAROLINE BERLER is a documentary director and editor based in New York City. She has worked as an Associate Producer, Assistant Editor and Sound Recordist on non-fiction projects that have been broadcast nationally, screened in film festivals around the world and released theatrically. She holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in Social Documentary Film from the School of Visual Arts and a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from New York University. *Dykes, Camera, Action!* is her directoral debut.

## PRODUCER

REBECCA BENSON is a producer of *Dykes, Camera, Action!* She is based in Brooklyn, New York. She explores her interests in environmental education, horticulture, musical instruments and early childhood through writing, water-color, photography and video. She earned her MFA in Social Documentary Film at SVA where she pursued her dream of collaborative filmmaking with a 5-year-old for her documentary titled *Alice Was Four*.



## CO-PRODUCER

ROSE VINCELLI GUSTINE is a film programmer and a story and strategy advisor for emerging filmmakers. She is Director of Operations and on faculty at the School of Visual Arts' MFA Social Documentary Film program. Previously, she worked for seminal filmmaker advocates IFP, as a curator and organizer for IFP Week - a film market for new documentaries and screenplays. She also curated and produced the IFP Labs - a mentorship program for first features, growing the program from four days to three weeks. In her eight years at IFP, she also produced many of their public programs, and managed the Fiscal Sponsorship program. Rose started her documentary career as a film programmer for SilverDocs (now AFI Docs), and has served on the selection committees for the Venice Biennale Cinema College and the Southern Circuit Tour; grant review committees for NEA and NYFA; and on the juries of the SXSW, Brooklyn, and New Orleans Film Festivals. She is currently co-producing *Busy Inside*, a documentary feature about women with multiple personalities seeking harmony in their lives. She lives, walks, and cooks with her family in Brooklyn, NY.

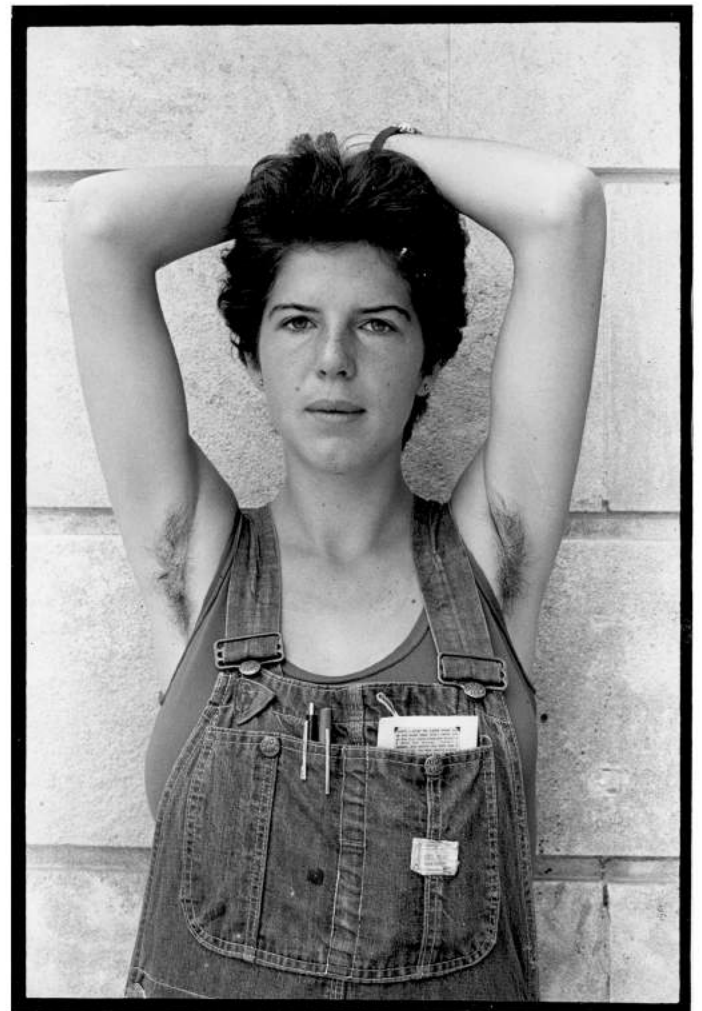
# DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

MELANIE MCLEAN BROOKS is an emerging documentary filmmaker, focusing on food politics and gender issues. Her most recent short documentary, *Big Hips, Big Dreams*, has screened at numerous film festivals around the county, including Big Sky Documentary Film Fest in 2018. Her current production is a food-focused documentary, *Eating the Enemy*, featuring sushi chef Bun Lai. As a director of photography, she has lensed *Dykes, Camera, Action!*; *The Reign of Sasha Velour*; *Sincerely, Alaska* and field stories for Comedy Central's *The Opposition*. Melanie and her husband, Ryan Brooks, founded Flying Giant Productions in New York City several years ago to produce branded content and advertisements that skew towards sustainability and social good. She received her Bachelors in Journalism from Rutgers University and a Master of Fine Arts at the School of Visual Arts in social documentary film. Melanie, Ryan, their dog Zoe and Flying Giant Productions recently relocated to sunny Denver, Colorado.

## COMPOSER

GIL TALMI is a world-renowned EMMY nominated composer, producer and recording artist with a passion for socially conscious projects. Blending his traditional orchestral background with tasteful modular electronics and eclectic world music sensibilities, Talmi has created a signature sound that can be heard in many award-winning productions worldwide.

Some of Gil's most recent work includes the opening theme to *CBS News: 50 Years of 60 Minutes*, *Chavela* (Aubin Pictures), *Straight/Curve* (Epix), *Desert Migration* (Best Revenge Productions), *Remittance* (Greenmachine Films) and *The Memory of Fish* (Reelblue), narrated by Lili Taylor, which had its world premiere at SIFF 2016. In 2017, Gil's score for *Chavela* was nominated for Best Original Composition - Feature Film Score by the Music & Sound Awards. 3 Documentaries which Gil scored premiered simultaneously at Doc NYC 2015: *All Rise*, *The Lost Arcade* (26 Aries) and *Love Between The Covers* (Blueberry Hill Productions).



Experimental filmmaker Su Friendrich.

# SELECTED CREDITS

A full list is available upon request.

## **Directed & Produced by**

Caroline Berler

## **Produced by**

Rebecca Benson

## **Co-Produced by**

Rose Vincelli Gustine

## **Edited by**

Caroline Berler

## **Director of Photography**

Melanie McLean Brooks

## **Additional Camera**

Brian Inocencio

Nottapon Boonprakob

## **Original Music by**

Gil Talmi

## **Sound Design by**

Gisela Fullà Silvestre

## **Interviewees**

Barbara Hammer

Rose Troche

B. Ruby Rich

Su Friedrich

Cheryl Dunye

Yoruba Richen

Vicky Du

Rachel Reichman

Sarah Schulman

Carrie Moyer

Kay Turner

Yvonne Welbon

Janet Baus

Jenni Olson

Lesli Klainberg



*Rose Troche, Director, Go Fish*



*Cheryl Dunye, Director, The Watermelon Woman*