a film by caroline berler

DYKES CAMERA ACTION!

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 GENSÖN CO PRODUCER ROSE VINCELLI GIUSTINE
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MELANIE MCLEAN BROOKS EDITED BY CAROLINE BERLER

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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.
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 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.

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.

Barbara Hammer, pioneer of lesbian cinema.
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 directorial debut.

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.

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).
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