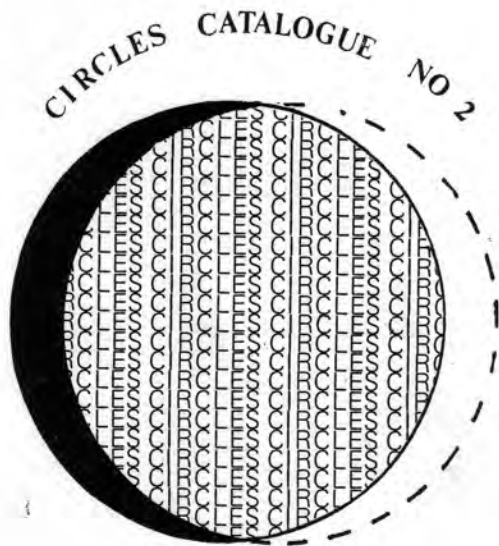


1981
2nd broadsheet



WOMEN'S WORK IN DISTRIBUTION
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P O Box 172, London N6 6DW
Telephone: 01-341 1439

Circles was started in 1980 by women to promote and distribute women's works in a variety of media: films, tapes, slides, video, performance and other related activities. By presenting women's work in this way we aim to show its richness and diversity and the threads which run through and link it together and also to encourage discussion and support for other women to make and show their own work on their own terms.

This independence is reflected in the catalogue which features contemporary material alongside works of historical importance by early women film-makers.

For more information on any of the works listed in this catalogue please contact Felicity Sparrow at the above address and telephone number.

ALICE GUY

There is nothing connected with the staging of a motion picture that a woman cannot do as easily as a man, and there is no reason why she cannot completely master every technicality of the art. The technique of the drama has been mastered by so many women that it is considered as much her field as a man's and its adaptation to picture work in no way removes it from her sphere. The technique of motion picture photography like the technique of the drama is fitted to a woman's activities.

Alice Guy, from the Moving Picture World, July 1914.

Alice Guy was not only the first woman filmmaker but, in 1896, she made the first fiction film *La Fee aux Choux* whilst still secretary to Leon Gaumont whose firm were at the time camera manufacturers. She became full-time director of Gaumont Productions where she experimented with early sound techniques and personally directed or supervised over 300 films for Gaumont until her departure for America in 1907. There she founded her own studio and production company, Solax, in 1910 in Fort Lee, New Jersey, where she directed over a hundred feature films and supervised many more until 1914 when the company folded. Very few of her early French films have been preserved and none of her Solax features have survived despite their undeniable popularity at the time ... *A HOUSE DIVIDED*, a short film made by Alice Guy for Solax in 1913 is one of the few of her films in existence today. Apart from its historic value, the film is of interest in that its topic is a familiar one and, although rooted in a Victorian view of marriage it shows Alice Guy's humour and her insight into the role of women as wives.



Alice Guy

Body. Identity. The body as identity. Using objects, masks, costumes, I transform and multiply my body image so that the interior self may manifest itself as exterior self, so that the body language may materialise the language of the unconscious.

Autorepresentation. The body as self. The self as labyrinth. Actions. Mental images. Rituals of identity.

Inter-representation. Two women looking at each other, filming each other. Double glance. The Self and Other/She successively and simultaneously overwhelm my perceptive field. Passing in front and behind the camera, destroying classical dichotomies and roles like subject/object, performing/recording, seeing/being seen. Assuming an inter-body and interpersonal language.

Feminine universe. Thinking through images on female sexuality or mirrors, or my own birth or pain or desire or her own death or ancient pre-patriarchal myths or African women's sexual mutilations or feminine archetypes or violence or memory or lunar symbolism or projection or immobility and movement or sparkling surfaces or touch sensations or light and shadow or artificial flowers or glittering tissues or blood mothers.



Still from *Unheimlich II: Astarti*

GABRIELLE BOWN

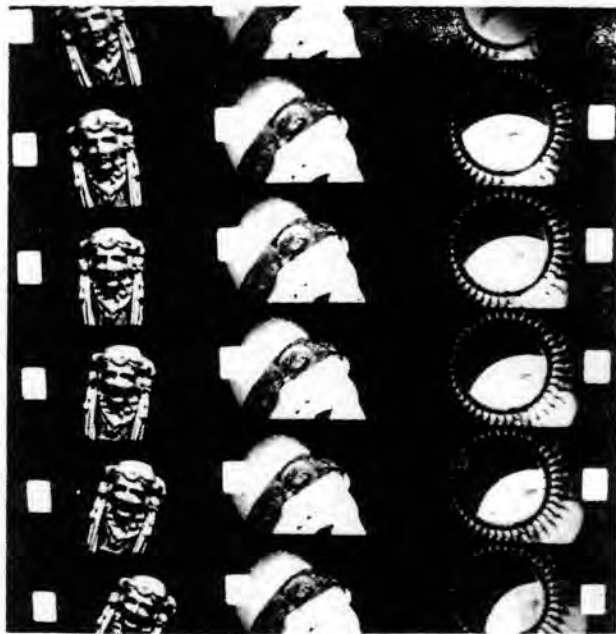
WRESTLING

By examining the response of the spectator to representations of violence as entertainment, *Wrestling* raises questions as to the social and sexual role of ritualised male aggression. The film explores connections between violence, voyeurism and documentary filmmaking, concentrating on the look of the spectator and using different image qualities both to emphasise the materiality of film and to represent different modes of perception. *Wrestling* challenges notions of objectivity and transparency, and encourages an active/critical response from the spectator. This response may logically be extended to other representations of violence in the media, whether in the form of News, current affairs or light entertainment.

Not so much about male bodies coming into forcible contact as about relations between voyeurism and documentary film making. A highly concentrated film which radically alters the quality of its images to criticise our culture's fascination with violence as entertainment and spectacle. (Jane Clarke, *Time Out*)



Wrestling is open to feminist analysis, but was not made for an exclusively female audience.



Still from *Unheimlich I: Dialogue Secret*

There are two distinct periods in our work:
THE BODY TRILOGY including *Double Labyrinthe* (1976); *L'Enfant qui a pissé des Paillettes* (1977); *Soma* (1978) and *Arteria Magna in dolore laterali* (1979) and
THE CYCLE OF THE UNHEIMLICH including *Unheimlich I: Dialogue Secret* (1977-79), *Kha-Les Embaumees, premier chant pour Unheimlich* (1979-80), *Unheimlich II: Astarti* (1979-80); *Unheimlich III: Les Meres* (1980-81); *Selanna, deuxième chant pour Unheimlich* (in progress).

JUDITH HI

Much of my recent work has been concerned with my own and other women's experience of cyclic menstrual time, and with the patterns of dreaming and creativity associated with the menstrual cycle. I am interested in dreaming and in myths about women and femaleness, in particular myths made by women, and the symbols women use to express and define experiences which are exclusively female.

I work with film, slides, sound tapes and occasionally video, usually producing continuous installations or slide and sound tape show. Whenever possible, I like to be present when my work is shown so that discussion can take place.

... I could tell you of frequent dream-images during the pre-menstrual days and nights ... Awakening with the certain knowledge I have been dreaming, these dream-memories are 'atmospheric'. Darkish, moody atmospheres, sometimes coloured, clouding details I sense were in my dreams but which I can't define. Waking to feel a bit vulnerable ...
 ... An image of Isis coming in from the ocean on a raft. The raft had a fine structure, based on the triangle, erected on it ... in red. A sense of ocean... sea is maybe a frequent dream image amongst my stronger dreams. It is supportive, not threatening.
 ... I have an unqualified sense of anticipation, expectancy and mental restlessness.
 ... My concept of time shifts. Time seems to move more slowly than usual or I am more aware of time passing than usual.
 ... I was watering a red flower everyday. Could see it was going to be a big red flower. Suddenly it opened into a beautiful, enormous red lily. I felt overawed at the sight of it. This dream was the very same day a period started.
 ... I thought she said either "You run like Persephone" or "You have the touch of Persephone".
 (excerpts from women's letters *Water Into Wine*)

LYNNE CONROY

IRONING

A personal interpretation of a portion of the story *I Stand Here Ironing* by Tillie Olsen

I wanted to make a film whose source is our common love for each other even if that love has been rooted in pain and separation. It is my beginning to reaching my mother. And a legacy to my daughter. Aesthetically, I wanted to create frames that protest the degradation of women's bonds and fragmentation of ourselves.

In a kitchen alive with rich textures and fabrics, utensils and what nots, we are introduced to a mother of five talking with a school counsellor about her oldest daughter. The story flows in almost stream-of-consciousness as she reflects and irons. A woman from the "outside", the school, has come to hold the mother accountable ... [the mother] stands before a possible judgement. She thinks as she irons, "I stand here ironing, and what you asked me moves tormented back and forth with the iron." (Susie Chancey)



Ironing

BOTTOM

In *Water Into Wine* I recorded details of the menstrual cycles of 27 women over thirteen lunar months. The work is concerned with the use of the menstrual cycle as a measure of time; it explores the relationship between the menstrual and lunar cycles, between menstruation and dreaming, and between the menstrual cycle and creativity. An earlier film work, *Pandora*, dealt with my own (at the time) ambivalent attitude towards the menstrual taboo, and how this was expressed in my dreams.

In *Marian's Mirror*, the moon, the sun and the mirror are used for divination. A woman reflects the moon, sun and sea in her mirror.



Water into Wine

ROBINA ROSE

For me the form of a film is inseparable from its content - the "romantic painterliness" of *Birthrites* and the awkward uncertainty of *Jigsaw* reflect and grow out of their subjects. I also believe that the retaining of "accessible subject matter" will act as an invitation to audiences for whom the aesthetic might otherwise be unacceptable, and vice versa.



Autism - mental activity which is controlled by the wishes of the individual as contrasting with *reality thinking* - controlled by the conditions imposed by the real nature of objects and events. More or less equivalent to wishful thinking or phantasy. (a psychological dictionary definition).

JIGSAW (1980)

Over a long period I had recorded 'images of urban breakdown', (people in buses, on tube trains, in streets ... talking to themselves, screaming, twiddling their fingers, laughing for no reason etc ... having 'gone over the edge').

I found many of these behavioral images both in anthropological writings on religious ritual and in literature on autism.

What separates them seems to be that whereas in Sufic prayer ritual or Haitian voodoo trance they constitute an act of social union, in autism they represent the opposite - a triumph of isolation.

Is it this which separates 'madness' from 'sanity'?

The definitions and the images struck me as having parallels within modern and post-modern art and culture ... (performance art and rock music as well as painting, sculpture etc ... and of course 'film theory' itself).

Communication difficulty being a main feature of autism - the film is as much about perception, and its own form as a film, as 'about autism'.

It is shot at first in colour ... withdrawing into black and white as we (the filmmaker and viewer) enter into the perceptual preoccupations/obsessions of the autistic child ... with an emphasis on sound rather than language. (We are drawn into listening to different patterns and textures of 'atmosphere' - e.g. the sounds in the creak of a swing.

By the end of the film the children have disappeared and we are left immersed in the abstraction of their/our condition.

We 'become autistic' rather than 'observe autism'.

We recognise ourselves rather than retreat into voyeurism.

BIRTHRITES (1977)

With contraception and abortion readily available today, the consequence of childbirth is no longer automatic. Women, whose role is thus more in question, must nevertheless, I believe, confront this aspect of their potentiality. Whether or not they opt to embrace it, they must weigh up what childbirth is.

As a woman of 25, it became an issue I felt it important to deal with. The result of this involvement is this film.

If one chooses to have a child, it becomes necessary to contemplate the way in which one is to give birth (under what circumstances) and the dehumanisation which takes place in many hospitals (induction, epidurals, etc) does not make these seem the basis for 'ideal' circumstances.

I met a woman (in fact German) - Julia Laurer - who was pregnant and who wanted to have a 'natural' birth, and was prepared to have it filmed. We went together to a lecture of Dr. Frederick Leboyer.

The film is not, however, a pure 'Leboyer' birth - but nor do I feel that it should be.

His teaching is that of an attitude rather than a method.

Two things were important to Julia. She wanted to give birth in a squatting position and to involve her family around her throughout.

The film is a document of my understandings of these events and relationships.

JENI THORNLEY

MAIDENS

I have a kind of love hate relationship to film. I am obsessed with it and can't let go of it ... This tension, this dynamic provides the movement in my life at present. Film is inside me. My father was a cinema manager and film distributor. I watched films endlessly from age 4 in his cinema. Rejected by my mother when my baby brother was born I reeled into the cinema. The space became the womb for me, my mother. The images, the dark, still line my consciousness. I am just learning to let go of it, slowly, and learn that world exists outside the cinema ... *Maidens* was made over a period of three years. The film developed its own organic growth. I could not force it to shape, it needed to grow. This is how I like to work. It suits the compilation form, too, a film form I am naturally drawn to. It's a film patchwork ...

Maidens is a very intimate film about the film-maker and her family. In the format of a compilation documentary, Jeni Thornley traces the herstory of her maternal family through four generations - from its extended family beginnings on a Tasmanian farm through two wars and a depression to her own immediate family living in the city. It is the story of seventy years of change and upheaval, the gradual disintegration of the traditional family and the search for new forms and ways of relating as typified by Jeni's attempts to break with the pattern of the past and to create a new identity for herself ... Jeni draws on a wide range of material to recreate her own herstory and her maternal heritage - she uses old family snapshots, letters and home movies, documentary footage as well as excerpts from films which she herself has appeared in. These images are woven together by her intensely powerful and poetically evocative narration. (Margaret Flaws)



Maidens

BABETTE MANGOLTE

What Maisie Knew

The title is taken from the novel by Henry James, in which Maisie, a young girl of five to six years of age, becomes more and more aware of how the sexual interlacement of the adults she is dependent upon affects her present life. What Maisie knows is both the subject and the narrative process of the novel.



Still from What Maisie Knew

In the film *Maisie* is represented by the camera presence and perception. What you see is what *Maisie* sees, as well as how she sees it and what she thinks she sees. So, the camera is used as an objective vision which is descriptive of the character, *Maisie*. This vision is presented through a succession of narrative tableaux composed of various everyday situations. The dramatic tension is created by the evolution of *Maisie's* perception of these situations, and, as Henry James said, "You still have room for wonder at what *Maisie* knew".

There? Where?

An essay on displacement. Where are these voices, here or there? And these images, near or far away? Are the images commenting on the dialogue, or vice versa? Intentionally there are no references to where is what. The film is also a documentary on Southern California.

(NOW) or Now in Parenthesis

It is a linear succession of activities mostly involving the manipulation of objects by hands. It starts with one hand and a chair and ends with three hands.

It is a double statement about film as the immediate aspect of things seen in the present tense without memories, resemblances, or past associations and film as literally obvious.

Thus the film (now) is a representation of a 'continuous present' (shot) with gaps (cuts). Film = Now. Projected film = (Now). The now is made obvious on the pack of cigarettes, the parenthesis by the fades, the continuous present is seen in close up, there is no reference, no establishing shot, no description of the off-screen and no message.

This film (manifesto) is dated 1976.

LOIS WEBER

I like to direct because I believe that a woman more or less intuitively brings out many of the emotions that are rarely expressed on the screen. I may miss what some of the male directors get, but I will get other effects that they will miss. *Lois Weber, from an interview 1916*

The first American woman filmmaker, *Lois Weber*, is one of the most famous woman directors of the silent era although her work is rarely seen now. Her career as director lasted from 1908 to 1934, however she began in musical comedy with a touring stage company, coming to film in 1907 and, like many of the women 'stars' in Hollywood at that time, she was given the opportunity to write and direct her own films. All of *Lois Weber's* films deal with subjects in which she personally believed and she was a pioneer in bringing to the screen a number of controversial issues (*Where are My Children?* made in 1916 was one of the first films to argue for birth control - although anti-abortion). *Lois Weber* founded her own independent production company and studio in 1917, allowing her more freedom to express her ideas through the film medium.

It is the quality of picture which comes out of that studio by which I shall stand or fall. And consequently I shall labour hard and long to make them constructive pictures of real ideas which shall have some intimate bearing on the lives of the people who will see them. If I can swing that big a contract successfully, I shall be happy. *Lois Weber, Moving Picture World, July 1917*



Claire Windsor
in *The Blot*

She made *The Blot* in 1921 for *Lois Weber Productions*. Although, like all her films, there is a deep moral tone, the film is a sensitive portrayal of a young girl trying to marry out of the 'genteel poverty' of her background. With an obsession for details of middle class life, 'correct' behaviour and the conventions which shape the lives of the film's women (with her last pennies the mother will forgo all in order to set a lavish cream tea for a prospective suitor and keep up appearances), *Lois Weber* brings a rare depth to her characters and their settings, in particular to the relationship between the mother and daughter.