

Gravitational Lensing: Feminist Film Dialogues

Program 15: Women, War & Resistance

Shapeshifters Cinema, May 23, 2026

***Rat Life and Diet in North America* (1968, 16mm film), by Joyce Wieland, 14 mins.**

"A band of revolutionary gerbils escape their cat jailors and journey up the Hudson, where they hide out at a millionaire's estate and perfect their tactics as guerilla fighters. It has some hard-to-forget, singular images...Miss Wieland is more than a diary-like recorder of domestic enthusiasms." –Manny Farber

***I Was Born in 1988* (2022, DV) by Yasaman Baghban, 8.5 mins.**

A series of executions of Iranian political prisoners began in the summer of 1988, following the end of the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq. For more than three decades, the artist found herself preoccupied with the coincidence of this massacre and her birth in August 1988. The prisoners were all buried in mass graves; the most significant of which was called Khavaran. The mothers of these prisoners are a symbol of resistance and freedom, and they are called the mothers of Khavaran. This film is an experimental documentary and a personal essay based on these events.

***Viet Flakes* (1962-67, 8mm film shown on 16mm film) by Carolee Schneeman, 8.5 mins.**

Viet-Flakes was composed from an obsessive collection of Vietnam atrocity images, compiled over five years from foreign magazines and newspapers. Schneemann used an 8mm camera and a unique lens system to "travel" within the photographs, producing a volatile animation. Broken rhythms and visual fractures are heightened in a sound collage by James Tenney, which features Vietnamese religious chants and secular songs, fragments of Bach and 1960s pop hits.

***Black & White* (2019, DV) by Zoe Aiano & Anna Benner, 19 mins.**

The small Czech town of Třeboň found itself at the centre of unexpected international attention when the world-wide press picked up on an obscure urban legend from World War Two, some 70 years after the event. The story concerns a nurse who was raped by a Nazi and contracted syphilis as a result. While tending other wounded soldiers, she seized her opportunity for revenge and systematically seduced them to pass on the deadly disease. She was so successful that eventually the gestapo had her executed. At least, this is the version told by the international press, but the residents of the town also have their own contradictory interpretations, including the local historian and even the man who erected the plaque in the first place. *Black & White* pieces this story together through a collage of interviews with a group of locals. The film explores how the story came about in the first place, and how it evolved after it ended up in the news. Their reflections are visualized through a combination of excerpts from the history of cinema, together with animation, problematizing the types of tropes and conventions used to depict the roles of women.

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***Lysistrata* (2024, multi-projector expanded cinema performance) by Lydia Greer & Facing West Shadows, 22 mins.**

Lysistrata is a reimagining of Aristophanes' ancient tragi-comedy, reflecting on collective resistance, reconciliation, and the quest for peace amid endless cycles of war. The work takes its narrative from Aristophanes' play, which tells the story of a group of women who bring an end to the decades-long Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, forging peace between endlessly warring factions by withholding sex, occupying government buildings, weaving as a tool for diplomacy, and freeing the women of Sparta from prison to join forces. Originally exhibited as a six-channel, 40-foot audiovisual installation and now also performed as an expanded cinema work with live shadow puppets, it was

