

FILMING DESIRE
A JOURNEY THROUGH WOMEN'S CINEMA
A Film By Marie Mandy



A WOMEN MAKE MOVIES RELEASE

WMM • 462 Broadway, 5th Floor • New York • NY • 10013
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SYNOPSIS

What do women dream of, and how do they make other women and men dream? Starting from desire, from the way in which women filmmakers film the body, love, sensuality, and sexuality, this video explores contemporary women's cinema. Interviewing women filmmakers from the five continents, and taking a bite out of taboos and forbidden subjects along the way, it undertakes to update the specificity of their point of view and of what women bring to film today.

Interviews and film extracts:

Sally Potter (UK)
Carine Adler (UK)
Agnes Varda (France)
Catherine Breillat (France)
Jeanne Labrune (France)
Liliana Cavani (Italy)
Francesca Comencini (Italy)
Doris Dorrie (Germany)
Deepa Mehta (India)
Patricia Rozema (Canada)
Paule Baillargeon (Quebec)
Lea Pool (Quebec)
Moufida Tlatli (Tunisia)
Safi Faye (Senegal)
Jane Campion (New Zealand)



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Director
Marie Mandy

Cinematographers
Dominique Smersu
Virginie Saint-Martin

Editor
Dominique Lefever

Sound
Hélène Lamy-au-Rousseau
Guillaume Valeix

Music
Hélène Blazy

A FRANCO-BELGIAN CO-PRODUCTION

SAGA Film (Brussels)
the factory (Paris)

in co-production with ARTE and the RTBF (Belgian television)

France/Belgium • 2000 • 60 minutes • Color • Beta SP
Multilingual (French, English, Italian, German, Tunisian Arabic, Wolof, Hindi)
with French Sub-titles



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BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Belgian born director **MARIE MANDY** was born in Leuven in 1961. She grew up in Africa and the United States, and received a Bachelor's degree in Roman Philology from the University of Louvain. In 1988 she graduated from the London International Film School, thanks to grants from the Belgian Vocational Foundation and a scholarship from the International Rotary Foundation. She completed her training with Delia Salvi (Actor's Studio), Jiri Menzel and Krzysztof Kieslowski (Directing) and took a certificate from EAVE in 1992.

In 1989 she created her own production company in Brussels, Amazone Films, with which she produced and directed **Judith** (short, 1989), Pardon Cupidon (feature, 1992), and Madeleine in Heaven (documentary, 1999). She has since directed several documentaries and worked for the French Television ARTE and for the Belgian channel RTBF.

As a photographer she worked as a portrait photographer for several magazines, photographing art world and business personalities. She has shown her photographs and her "photo-weavings" in a dozen countries. She produced, from 1994 to 1997, important photo-journalistic work on the situation of disabled people in Europe and on institutionalized children, all the while pursuing her independent work as a photographer and filmmaker.

From 1993 to 1995 she was president of the ARPF (Belgian Association of Film Directors-Producers). She has been vice-president of the Belgian committee of the SACD (Author's Guild) since 1996.

She currently lives and works in Brussels and Marseilles.



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MARIE MANDY FILMOGRAPHY

The Man Who Thought Too Much, short, 16mm, color, 1 min., 1986

Footlights, documentary, 16mm, color, 13 min., 1986

The Trouble With Mary, short, 35mm, B&W, 9 min., 1986

Judith, short, 35mm, color, 13 min., 1989

Le Spectre de Marx, entretien avec Jacques Derrida, documentary, 28 min., Beta SP, 1996

Changing Places, documentary, 35mm, Beta SP, 1997

Paul Ricoeur, Interprétons notre monde contemporain, documentary, 30 min., Beta SP, 1997

Group Portrait, Belgian Filmmakers by Themselves, documentary, 63 min., Beta SP, 1998

Madeleine in Heaven, documentary, 52 min., Beta SP, 2000

Filming Desire, a journey through women's cinema, documentary, 60 and 90 min., digital video, 2000



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FILMMAKER STATEMENT

All the questions that I pondered as a director are undoubtedly the reason why I decided to do this film. What is filmmaking? And what is filmmaking from a woman's point of view?

I realized that there was no clear answer to this question neither for me nor for my female colleagues.

I've always been struck by the fact that we – as viewers - have to put up with films that mostly convey predominantly a male point of view, although men represent only half the inhabitants of this planet. It is a terrible thing to see that no one has ever taught us how to develop our vision as women neither in the history of arts nor in film schools.

In this process I also took into account my own growing disappointment toward "commercial" films, often directed by men (which is not a negative thing, I don't want to be misunderstood). I found less and less pleasure in watching such films. Indeed, I couldn't relate to their characters anymore as the leading female parts had more to do with men's fantasy of what women should look like than what I believe they really are nowadays (or at least than what I feel I am).

Throughout the years, the gap has widened in a way that is almost inversely proportional to the liberation of women in society (Isn't that amazing!). I certainly don't want to seem too attached to the past but it seems to me that a certain movie industry is in decline: do European films still offer parts like the parts played by Simone Signoret, Romy Schneider, Monica Vitti or Jeanne Moreau? Do American films still offer beautiful parts portraying strong women like those that were admired



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throughout Hollywood's Golden Era, and with which we will forever associate such names as Katherine Hepburn, Lauren Bacall, Bette Davis or Gene Rowlands? (leading characters that actually make women and men dream).

More recent films like Ridley Scott's "Thelma and Louise" (whose script was written by a woman) or Almodovar's films like "All About My Mother" – that offered magnificent parts to some actresses – strengthened the need to deal with leading characters that I would admire. I ended up looking for a feeling of satisfaction where I could find it more often - in women's films. I am thinking of Sally Potter's "Orlando", Patricia Rozema's "I've Heard the Mermaids Singing", Chantal Akerman's "A Coach in New York", Agnes Varda's "Sans toit ni loi", Marleen Gorris's "Antonia's Line", Catherine Breillat's "Ama Soeur" or Jane Campion's "Holy Smoke", a few titles - with a large theatrical release - that I really enjoyed.

I really liked these movies and I rarely felt the same about "mainstream commercial" films, that is to say the satisfaction and pleasure that we feel when we can truly relate to situations or characters. I realized that, probably as most women viewers, I hadn't set high standards when I made my choices of films to the point that I even accepted for too long identifying with male leading characters or caricatures of women without asking myself if I liked it. (After all, if you have never tasted Belgian chocolate you cannot imagine how good and unique it is!)

This systematic analysis and the number of films that I screened have led to some obvious facts that changed my opinion on filmmaking in an irreversible way. This is precisely the message that I want to convey to the audience.

Given the fact that images in women's films are often physical and that they generally focus on body language, I wanted to prove that the body is the most direct way to understand women's filmmaking. Then the goal of this film was to find out the



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distinctive aspects of women's filmmaking and their cinematographic language through the way the concept of desire is filmed. I wanted to explore this new territory without referring to any type of feminist, sexist or moralizing ideas. I wanted to start from inside this world, to focus on creation and the views of women filmmakers themselves; that's why I decided to let women, exclusively, speak about their work and favored creation over criticism.

The desire to go on this journey into women's filmmaking has more to do with necessity, curiosity and a personal enjoyment than with an excess of feminist attitude. As a director, I feel the need (a vital need as it feeds my imagination) to be true to myself. I remember asking myself so many questions when I shot my first love scene in my first feature film "Sorry Cupid". I could suddenly visualize a stream of love scenes that I had previously seen in movies with all the usual positions of the bodies and the cameras as well as the male directors' different concepts of this subject, and then I asked myself: "How can I shoot this scene from my own point of view without thinking of what I have preciously seen? How can I shoot a love scene from the point of view of the woman that I am?"

Years later, this film came as a continuation of my research: to find out my own visual and cinematographic codes rather than accept and apply those mostly set by men who have statistically dominated the history of filmmaking for more than a century.

Marie Mandy
January 2000

