



# The Reel Deal



# Media Zine

This zine will discuss the perception of women through the history of Australian cinema and female filmmakers. This zine includes four short films surrounding feminism that were created by female film-makers during the uprising of feminist and experimental films. These four short films were created through the 70s to the 90s and raised a new consciousness on societal norms regarding women.

During the 1970s to the 1990s female filmmakers obtained significant possibilities to share stories that had previously been ignored. Women were able to create experimental films to display their rebellion towards the sexism within society. During those times, women were represented purely through body images with little to no consciousness in films. They were the prize of the film industry and the desires of all male filmmakers. This reached into society and added to the pre-existing stigma around women's portrayal in cinema. However, females managed to acknowledge this prejudice and create short experimental films that defied the norms created by the male-operated film industry and society itself.

They directed and produced short films as part of the Experimental Film Fund. They also filmed with co-operatives such as the Sydney women's film group and reel women in Melbourne. These female filmmakers were able to examine the roles of women in society and the film industry and soon create concepts that raised awareness.

This was known as the experimental movement of cinema

I would also like to mention that all these films are up to interpretation. This zine however displays a clear overview on the creators' thoughts when making these films as well as my own personal views and feelings of how I perceive them as a woman.

Much appreciated.

# ● cheap ● blonde



## **Cheap Blonde** 1998 Janet Merewether

This film is a short exploration of the link between words and their meanings. Twelve words from a famous filmmaker's statement, 'Cinema is the history of men filming women,' are rearranged 22 times to change and distort the statement's original meaning. This work intends to expose the artificial character of every filmed image through a study and deconstruction of the notion of 'truth'.

The first part of the short film displays a woman bathing in sunlight with a 'waterfall' behind her. This opening shot has a monologue which describes the woman's emotions/actions as for her laying in the sun.

Later on within the film, shots of the women are shown to be green screened. It switches from greenscreen to waterfall. Throughout the entirety of the short film the same woman remains, laying in front of the greenscreen which appears to be switching from blur panels to water fall to coloured bars.

This short film represents the way females are represented in cinema, with the women laying and the rearrangement of the words stated. The words display the sense of which women are ruled by men within the cinema industry. This short film contrasts these actions through use of fake backgrounds compared to the real women. This type of cinematography creates the illusion of a woman in a waterfall and therefore the creation of the 'male gaze'

This short film advises the audience to determine whether films cater to the male gaze and reanalyse films through an open minded lens. It triggers conversations surrounding the portrayal of women and the usage of their figures, looks and attitudes within the cinema industry. This short film experiments with layout, color and sound to demonstrate the clear sexism of men and women in the cinema workplace.

# Pussy Pumps Up

1979 Antoinette Starkiewicz

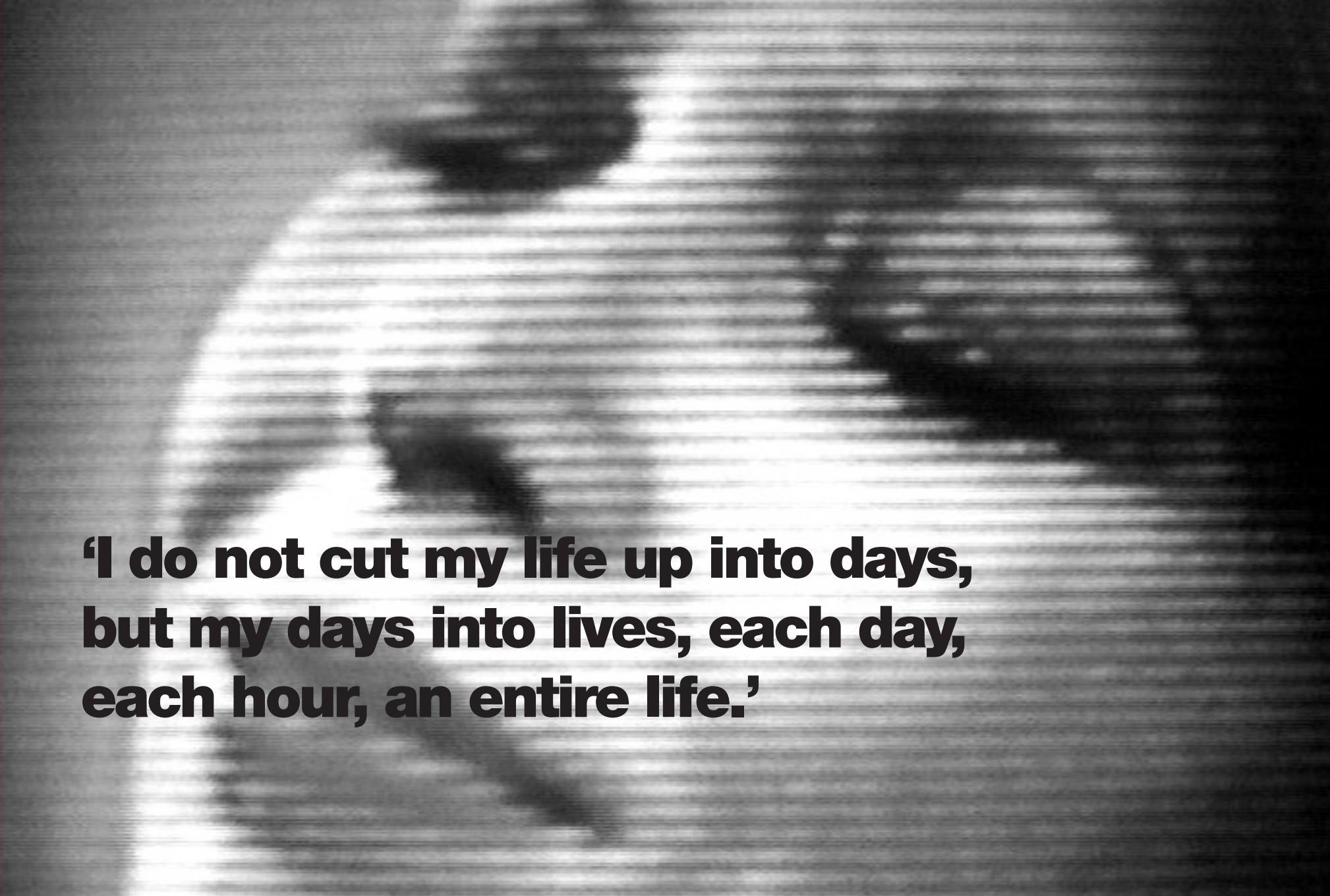
This short film focuses on the contrast between femininity and masculinity through the use of an animated cat-girl. This little heroine descends from a rope to musical accompaniment, displaying sensuality, grace, and coquettishness before metamorphosing into a strong, powerful figure. The music in the background describes the emotions of the current moment. It gives off an eerie and intense feeling compared to the scenes.

During the middle of the short film the heroine transforms into a swan-like figure, presenting an elegant and graceful style. The scene then later mends into multiple feminine figures being looked over by a man, highlighting the greater meaning of the film.

One of my favorite quotes describes the film 'In a wry exploration of women's sexuality, the character Pussy demonstrates the play between the masculine and the feminine, the strong and the passive, the observer and the observed, as she metamorphoses between female, feline and male figures.'

This film was powerful as it delved into both femininity and masculinity, something previously overlooked. This experimental short film used animation as a way of displaying this influential idea, using delicate small lines and muted tones. The sound connected to this film told a deeper version of the story, making an even more compelling film.





**‘I do not cut my life up into days,  
but my days into lives, each day,  
each hour, an entire life.’**



## Conclusion

To conclude this zine, I would like to add my personal opinions on the portrayal of women in cinema. For as long as I can remember, women on screens from movies I've watched filmed in the early 60s to now are sexualised and created upon the male gaze. Either this or women weren't encouraged to create film works at all due to the backlash and reactions received by people, especially men around the world. As a rebellion to this, women started managing to create their own media, such as short films. These small but influential practices helped raise awareness on the inaccurate and overly sexualised reality women face on screen, and outside of the screen. People analyzed the way women created short films and admired their rebellion towards gender norms and female stereotypes. These films went outside of people's comfort zones and influenced many women around the globe to create films and such of their own accord.



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