

Historic Programm Focus

FEMALE TERROR

Line-up

The highly successful film scholar Dr. Alison Peirse (University of Leeds/UK) curated the special program **FEMALE TERROR** for **/slash Filmfestival 2019** (Sep 19. to 29.) that tells of the film history of female horror film. Spanning from Ida Lupino's essential noir **THE HITCH-HIKER**, over Karen Arthur's obscure central piece **THE MAFU CAGE**, and Mary Lamert's mega success **PET SEMATARY**, to the enigmatic **OFFICE KILLER** by the star photographer Cindy Sherman, and combines both auteur horror and Vera Chytilova's **WOLF'S HOLE** or Marina de Van's **IN MY SKIN**, as well as wild exploitation visions by Barbara Peeters (**HUMANOIDS FROM THE DEEP**) or Amy Holden Jones (**THE SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE**).

Head over to our website to learn more: www.slashfilmfestival.com

The Mafu Cage

Director: Karen Arthur | USA 1978 | 102 min

Monkeys. Madness. Murder. Directed by Karen Arthur, *The Mafu Cage* is a truly bizarre tale of two sisters, Ellen and Cissy, who are in a symbiotic, abusive, and enabling sexual relationship. Their father was an anthropologist who collected African objects. Now deceased, the sisters live together in his mansion, and Cissy has a "mafu" (monkey) cage in the living room, where she keeps her simian subjects. But one day, Ellen's new boyfriend David comes to the house, and Cissy decides she needs a human "mafu"... For critic Kier-La Janisse, *The Mafu Cage* is "one of the most compelling and uniquely dark films of the psychotic woman subgenre." Watch this screening to find out why.

Wolf's Hole

Director: Věra Chytilová | CZ 1987 | 92 min

In *Wolf's Hole*, writer Daniela Fischerová and writer-director Vera Chytilová offer up a teen slasher film in 1980s Czechoslovakia. A group of eleven teenagers go to a skiing camp on a remote snowy mountain. But when they arrive, the stern instructors insist that there should only be ten teenagers. Who is the intruder? Chytilová was an avant-garde filmmaker and a key contributor to the Czech New Wave. As such, the camerawork is experimental, actors range from accomplished to amateur, and the message is ideologically disruptive, exploring how groups of people without power are expected to conform to, not

to question, the desires of their leaders. It also has a truly fabulous dead-girl-inside-a-snowman reveal.

The Hitch-Hiker

Director: Ida Lupino | USA 1953 | 71 min

Ida Lupino was one of only two women to develop a significant filmmaking career in classical Hollywood. Here, she co-writes and directs what is arguably the first woman-directed horror film. *The Hitch-Hiker* is often classified as film noir, but it has striking horror elements. Essentially a three-hander road movie, two men pick up a hitch hiker in the desert, who turns out to be a serial killer, sadistic and shrewd. The killer's determination to outrun the police offers almost unbearable tension, while his enjoyment at psychologically torturing his companions creates a perpetual undercurrent of dread and anxiety. With a different score, no-one would consider this as anything but smart, stripped-back, and suspenseful horror.

Humanoids from the Deep

Director: Barbara Peeters | USA 1980 | 80 min

Described by critic Phillip French as the “most mindlessly violent and rape-obsessed” film of 1980, *Humanoids from the Deep* is an eco-horror mix of *Jaws*, *Piranha* and *The Creature From the Black Lagoon*. In a Californian fishing community, a cannery undertakes experiments to increase the local fish population. But the fish mutate into humanoids who have three goals: come ashore, rape the women, murder the men. After production, executive producer Roger Corman hired the second unit assistant director to shoot and add more nude rape scenes. Director Barbara Peeters then requested that her name was removed from credits, but it remains to this day. In 2019 she commented “I don't talk about that film... I've always – since a small, little girl – been a feminist”.

The Slumber Party Massacre

Director: Amy Holden-Jones | USA 1982 | 87 min

When Trish invites her high school friends for a sleepover, a maniac with a power drill is determined to crash the party. Fun ensues, including extensive nudity, phallic power tools and a girl wielding a machete with great success. The cult classic was a huge success upon release, creating not only two sequels, but also a major critical furore. Janet Maslin wrote in the *New York Times* that *The Slumber Party* was akin to “violent pornography”, and no “less bloody, sexist or ugly than comparable films made by men. But it's a little more

reprehensible” because its writer Rita Mae Brown and director Amy Holden Jones “ought to know better”. When a woman is a horror filmmaker, does her gender mean that she is held to different standards than men?

The Seashell and the Clergyman

Director: Germaine Dulac | FR 1928 | 28 min

Surrealism is traditionally considered the domain of the male artist, and in Surrealist filmmaking the standard reference point is Luis Buñuel’s *Un Chien Andalou* (1929). What is often forgotten is the work of women Surrealists, here French avant-garde filmmaker Germaine Dulac, who created *The Seashell and the Clergymen* (1927). Described by the BFI as an “important early example of radical experimental feminist filmmaking”, the film follows an obsessive priest who falls, crawls, chases and strangles the figures who get the way of his pursuit of his desired, yet forbidden, woman. At a Paris screening at Studio Les Ursulines in 1928, the film was advertised as “a dream on the screen”. But is it a nightmare?

Pet Sematary

Director: Mary Lambert | USA 1989 | 103 min

Louis, Rachel, their children Ellie and Gage, and Church the cat move to a rundown rural house, right next to a very busy main road. They find a pet cemetery behind their property, built upon an ancient burial ground. Ellie asks “Daddy, what if Church dies and has to go to the pet cemetery?” and Louis replies, “well, if it was up to me, I’d let Church live up to be 100, but I don’t make up the rules.” Rules are made to be broken, and death and resurrection are wrought upon this young family. Director Mary Lambert came to horror after a successful career in music videos, and as such, *Pet Sematary* is visually and auditorily entertaining, her aesthetic a perfect companion to Stephen King’s hyperbolic screenplay.

Urban Ghost Story

Director: Geneviève Jolliffe | UK 1999 | 82 min

Described by *Variety* as “Ken Loach meets *The Exorcist*”, *Urban Ghost Story* is a contemporary ghost story set in a Glasgow tower block. Co-written and directed by Genevieve Jolliffe, it follows the uncanny experiences of 12-year-old Lizzie, who after almost dying in car crash, begins to experience poltergeists, possession and the interest of parapsychologists. Jolliffe fielded responses from financiers including “who’s directing? She can’t do it, she has no experience” and “what about [producer] Chris Jones directing instead, then

we'd finance it". But she'd had "experiences with the paranormal, my grandmother was a medium and I loved horror". Joliffe persevered and made the film, which went on to win a number of festival awards.

Ravenous

Director: Antonia Bird | USA/CZ/UK/MX 1999 | 101 min

Is this a Western? Is this a comedy? Is it a horror? A period drama? In the film that Time Out described as Dances with Werewolves (or, more accurately, Wendigos), Antonia Bird fluently directs Guy Pearce, Robert Carlyle and David Arquette as they explore cannibalism in 1840s California. Pearce and Carlyle are fantastic, the location shooting is beautiful, and the tone shifts so often the audience is never sure what is coming next. Are Pearce and Carlyle sexy vampires who are totally into each other? Or are they hard-bitten soldiers of war, determined to get their own way, each more lawless and wild than the lands they inhabit? Who knows? You decide.

In My Skin

Director: Marina De Van | FR 2002 | 93 min

In My Skin is a New French Extremity gruesome body horror, inspired by an event in writer, director and lead actor Marina de Van's childhood. A car ran over her leg, and she recalls "I felt no sense of panic, no pain, even though I should have passed out. I saw my leg just as another object". de Van plays Esther, who becomes obsessed with mutilating her own body, and then escalates to self-cannibalism. With little narrative motivation, and very limited access to Esther's interior world, In My Skin graphically and insistently focusses on Esther's behaviour, her increasing detachment from her body and, paradoxically, her pleasure and relief in destroying it.

The Boy From Hell

Director: Mari Asato | JP 2004 | 50 min

In 2004, a series of six films were created based on Hideshi Hino's horror manga, then released as "Hino Hideshi's Theatre of Horror". Mari Asato's The Boy From Hell is the third in the series, a gross and gory twist on "the monkey's paw" story. Setsu's only child, Daio is killed in a tragic accident, and she cannot bear the loss of her son. An elderly woman offers her a mysterious deal, and Daio agrees to sacrifice another child in order to return Daio to her. But the thing that returns bears little resemblance to her son, and, she discovers to her horror, that it must feed on human flesh...

The Grudge: Black Ghost

Director: Mari Asato | JP 2009 | 60 min

Female horror directors are still very rare in the conservative Japanese film industry. However, prolific director Mari Asato has now joined the ranks of Japanese women horror filmmakers including Kei Fujiwara, Shimako Sato and Kayoko Asakura. To commemorate the tenth anniversary of the popular Ju-on franchise, a double-feature was commissioned, and Asato wrote, produced and directed one of the features, Black Ghost. This is a supernatural ghost story centered on Nurse Yuko, who cares for Fukie, a young girl hospitalised with a stomach cyst. However, things go badly for everyone whom Fukie comes into contact with, and the story quickly escalates to take in possession, exorcism and an unborn, vengeful twin.

Office Killer

Director: Cindy Sherman | USA 1997 | 82 min

Awkward, frumpy Dorine Douglas is a copyeditor for Constant Consumer magazine, managing her colleague's contempt and caring for her awful mother. Constant Consumer is downsizing, and Dorine realises that she can circumvent the isolation of homeworking if she brings her colleagues home with her. But she'll have to kill them... The only film directed by fine artist Cindy Sherman, Office Killer is a Final Girl / Monster narrative that also knowingly parodies slasher film tropes. Led by Carol Kane (The Mafu Cage), Molly Ringwald (The Breakfast Club) and Jeanne Tripplehorn (Basic Instinct), who are clearly having a blast, watch Office Killer to see why critic Dahlia Schweitzer describes it as "the most unusual coming of age movie you have ever seen".