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MIRRORS to
WINDOWS
The artist as woman

MIRRORS TO WINDOWS: THE ARTIST AS WOMAN

"The tool of every self-portrait is the mirror. You see yourself in it. Turn it the other way, and you see the world." - Agnes Varda

'Mirrors to Windows: The Artist as Woman' is a unique film following an international cast of three generations of women artists who are forging their careers in the heat of the London art scene.

From the studio to the gallery, candid conversations infused with humour and zeal give us a rare insight into the lives of ten artists working across a diverse an array of mediums., united by an enduring belief in themselves and their work.

Featuring artists aged 22-82, the film forms a compelling collective biography, telling a cross-generational coming of age story. Act 1 sees three single-minded young artists at the start of their promising careers. Act 2 finds artists struggling with all the conflicts of middle age as they continue to work, and in Act 3, four artists are experiencing new-found freedom as their work becomes more active and successful than ever.

With artists hailing from Egypt, France, Germany, Iran, the UK and the USA, 'Mirrors to Windows' weaves ten unique perspectives in art to tell the multi-faceted story of an artist's life. Centered in London's booming art scene, their voices are echoed in art centres around the globe, from New York to Paris, Berlin to Tokyo, and beyond.

There have been many films on artists, but never before has a film traversed mediums, generations and continents, yet still felt like an intimate drop-in to an artists' studio. This extraordinary documentary reveals how artists' personalities, ideas, voices and practices exist in continuum with their art, treating it all as part of a whole -a life lived through art; art as a realm of being.

Filmed over a period of three years, Emmy award-winning director Susan Steinberg takes you on a fast-paced yet intimate journey behind the gallery walls to reveal the dynamic nature of this enigmatic calling. Taking advantage of both her 30 year career in documentary filmmaking and her training as a psychotherapist, Steinberg delivers a lively and attentive portrait of ten courageous and dedicated artists, whose story relates to us all. From youth to maturity, from the mirror to the window. In the negotiation between art and life, the artist emerges.

Featuring Maliheh Afnan, Alice Anderson, Helaine Blumenfeld OBE, Jodie Corey, Susan Collins, Nermine Hamman, Charlotte Hodes, Sarah Lederman, Almuth Tebbenhoff and Rose Wylie RA.

VOX POP



"Susan Steinberg has made a terrific, probing documentary about international female visual artists. She follows ten artists, well chosen both for their work and their personalities, in a cunningly well-organized fashion. It's an extremely well-told, full length film that I admire."
John Lahr, Writer & Theatre critic New Yorker Magazine

"A really inspiring, beautifully flowing and constructed film. 'Mirrors to Windows' transcends issues and presents its artists' personalities, ideas, voices, and workspaces in a continuum with their art, making it all part of a whole, the life lived through art, art as a realm of being."

Conrad Williams, Author of 'The Concert Pianist' & literary agent at Blake Friedmann



"The film is wonderful - vibrant, tender, infused with humour, insightful and unique. It is, in a way, a coming of age story, for an older generation as well as a younger one, an achievement that enhances its appeal, its timeless resonance."

Jenny Kingsley, Journalist and Writer



"The film is a Psychological portraiture. Uncovering the reality under the surface of art and creativity by showing the complexity of identity. The film creates real life role models for future generations."

Dr Ana Lleida Crespa, Adolescent Psychiatrist



"There was a lot of humility and modesty in the artists in this film, even though they have a lot of self-belief."

Rebecca Pelly-Fry, Director of the Griffin Gallery

VOX POP



"There's a real marked absence of an authoritative overview, which so often is the case. I think as a result of that, all the artists are given equal weighting. You're given the opportunity of seeing a range of different approaches and it works very well."

Paul Coldwell, Artist & Lecturer

"It is a terrific film: profound, perceptive, sensitive and remarkably revealing about each artist's work and her relationship with it, and all of it beautifully woven together to create a great contribution to the subject."

Celia Read, Artist



"It was simply stunning. I thought it would be honest and was hoping for it to also be intimate, but never expected it to be so honest or so intimate, especially as it never went for the easy option or the shocking option. As someone who trained as an anthropologist I felt that the film had the perfect interweave of the ethnographic and the analytic."

Katya Orell, Anthropologist



"'Mirrors to Windows' allows each artist to speak for herself, and in so doing triumphantly demonstrates the complexity, power, vibrancy and contemporary relevance of their individual work."

Isabelle Grey, Author of 'Good Girls Don't Die'

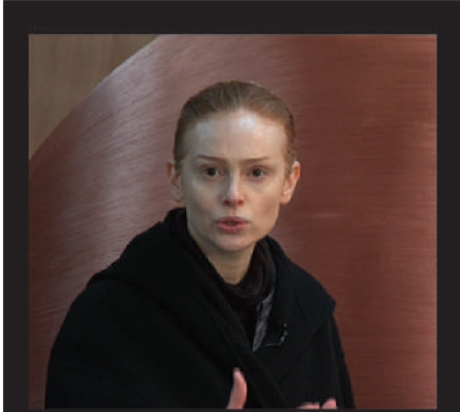


"What an inspiration. I found myself to be really moved by it. It actually made me cry. And today we saw the Rose Wylie at the RA summer exhibition. The film made all that experience all the more enriching."

Emily Fuller, Artist



Act One: Reflections in the Mirror



Alice Anderson

Born 1972. French-British sculptor and performer. Anderson started out as a video artist but now works primarily in copper wire, winding it around objects, furniture and even buildings, in collective performances exploring ritual, repetition and memory. She has shown at the Freud Museum, The Wellcome Collection, Whitechapel Gallery, the Venice Biennale and galleries around the world. She is part of an upcoming show at Saatchi Gallery.



Jodie Carey

Born 1981. British sculptor. Working with bones, blood, and ash, Carey breaks down materials to their simplest form, allowing them to speak eloquently and poetically, without interruption. Carey has exhibited in New York, Chicago, Amsterdam and Berlin, and has work in major UK collections such as Hauser & Wirth and the Saatchi Collection.



Sarah Lederman

Born 1986. British painter. Lederman's paintings disrupt traditional representations of the feminine, drifting between myths, dreams and fantasies. She exploits the materiality of the paint, luring viewers towards sensuality - fluid, free and uncontrollable. In 2009, Lederman was awarded the Caitlin Art Prize and was nominated for the Jerwood Painting Prize in 2010. Her work is in the David Roberts Collection.

Act Two: Breaking the Glass



Susan Collins

Born 1964. British digital artist.

Collins is one of the UK's leading digital media artists and the first female director of the Slade School of Fine Art in London. She creates interactive digital artworks, employing transmission, networking and time as primary materials. Collins exhibits internationally, with recent exhibitions in the UK, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Israel, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Tasmania, Turkey, Mexico, Thailand and Peru.



Nermine Hammam

Born 1967. Egyptian visual artist.

Making densely composed figurative prints which exist between painting and photography, Hammam is known for the distinct technique with which she reworks photography, addressing the influence of mass media and market stylization.

Hammam has exhibited in London, Paris, Cairo, Madrid, Greece, Ecuador, Belgium and Italy. Her work is in private collections around the world, including the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.



Charlotte Hodes

Born 1959. British collage and ceramic artist.

Hodes works with both digital and intricately hand cut collage. Centering on female iconography, she draws upon the decorative and applied arts, fashion and costume, questioning the hierarchy of the female figure as represented in art history. She was appointed the first Associate Artist at the Wallace Collection in London in 2005 and was awarded the Jerwood Drawing Prize in 2006.

Act Three: Beyond the Glass



Maliheh Afnan

Born 1935. Iranian artist.

Creating layered parchments of unintelligible script, her work evokes the eroding traces of people and faces lingering in the memory - an archaeological excavation into the collective psyche.

Afnan's work is in public collections such as The British Museum, London, and the Metropolitan Museum, New York.



Helaine Blumenfeld OBE

Born 1942. American sculptor.

Working in Britain and Italy, Blumenfeld has pioneered new methods of carving in stone. Working between abstraction and figuration, her sculptures speak directly to our shared humanity.

Her bronze and marble sculptures are located around the world as public art and she is widely known as the heir to Henry Moore.



Almuth Tebbenhof

Born 1949. German sculptor.

Working in steel, Tebbenhof creates brightly coloured explosive forms, stemming from abstract explorations of space and volume. Inspired by the process of making, it is through the act of working with her hands that she investigates themes of light, space and the origins of matter.



Rose Wylie RA

Born 1934. British painter.

With bold colours and spontaneous marks, Wylie works on enormous, unstretched, unprimed canvases, creating paintings alive with 'an artlessness that makes them all the more fresh and unpredictable'.

Her retrospective at Jerwood Gallery in 2012 was followed by an exhibition at Tate Britain 2013. She was awarded the John Moore Prize for Painting 2014 and became a member of the Royal Academy of the Arts, London, in 2015.



SUSAN STEINBERG | PRODUCER/DIRECTOR

Susan Steinberg is an Emmy award-winning writer, director and producer. Best known for her work on PBS series 'American Masters', she began her career as an editor on "Gimme Shelter" and on Robert Frank's notorious film, "Cocksucker Blues". Steinberg has produced and directed documentaries on Paul Simon, Edward R. Murrow and Ahmet Ertegun, the founder of Atlantic Records.

SELECTED CREDITS & REVIEWS

(As director, producer and writer):

"MIRRORS TO WINDOWS: THE ARTIST AS WOMAN"

Independent feature film

"ATLANTIC RECORDS: THE HOUSE THAT AHMET BUILT"

for American Masters/WNET/PBS NY

Emmy Award nominee, Best edited documentary and Best Musical program

A biographical journey with Mr. Ahmet Ertegun, the founder of Atlantic Records and son of the Turkish Ambassador to France, England and the USA.

"The filmmaker Susan Steinberg takes a perceptive approach to her subject, having Mr. Ertegun interviewed by a revolving cast of music-world gods and egomaniacs: figures like Ms. Aretha Franklin and Mr. Eric Clapton, but also Robert Plant, Lyor Cohen, David Geffen, Mick Jagger, Phil Collins and Mr. Ray Charles (in his last filmed interview). This could have seemed forced, but the reverse is true: the scenes come alive in part because both players have roughly equal status and really do come through as a series of conversations, with both parties seeming to enlighten each other."

New York Times May 2007

"EDWARD R. MURROW: THIS REPORTER"

for American Masters/WNET/PBS NY

Emmy Award. Directors Guild of America nomination for Best Director of a documentary.

Cine Golden Eagle, American Cinema Editors, Best edited documentary.

Two part Documentary on Edward R Murrow. who was the father of broadcast journalism and America's most influential practitioner. In the 1950's, Murrow was the sole television journalist to risk his career taking on the notorious Senator Joseph McCarthy.

"A definitive TV portrait of America's greatest broadcast journalist.... a first-rate show . . .for anyone interested in the history of broadcasting, this two-parter is a must."

The Associated Press

"Best of all, it selects, with uncommon and impressive care and taste, those moments from the Murrow radio and TV archives that resonate with the most power, intelligence and innovation."

New York Post, David Bianculli

"... important and impressive ... the radio segments selected by Steinberg are mesmerizing." Los Angeles Times, Howard Rosenberg

"... a poignant and enriching documentary."

Chicago Sun-Times, Daniel Ruth

"The biographical material alone makes "Edward R. Murrow" a superb production. Even better is the analysis of Murrow's contributions. This is a program that would have made him proud."

Kansas City Star

"PAUL SIMON: BORN AT THE RIGHT TIME"

for American Masters/WNET/PBS NY & Southbank Show"

Peabody Award, Directors Guild of America Best Director of a documentary.

Invited to The Sundance Film Festival, Emmy Nominee.

A biographical musical journey with singer/songwriter Paul Simon, from his teenage days with Art Garfunkle, in Queens, New York, to his solo career around the globe.

"This is more than a film, or a concert, or just another look at a pop icon. This is a biography, a solid documentary effort that takes a broad look at and around its subject in order to bring back something greater and put it in perspective. It's a front-row center backstage pass reflection of the man."

Hollywood Reporter, Rick Sherwood

"Susan Steinberg gives us an in-depth study of a man it seems impossible to know."

New York Newsday, John Anderson

"Equal parts critical bio and tour documentary, this Paul Simon profile is an exemplary reappearance of PBS' American Masters series, in which an artist's creative development is yoked to his human progress . . . this does it with intelligence and grace."

USA Today

"I was expecting music and biographical insights, and got plenty of both. What I wasn't expecting was tense drama and an emotional roller-coaster ride ☒ but I got plenty of that too ☒ painstakingly structured . . . this American Masters profile is a class act, about another class act. Like Simon's music and lyrics, it leaves you entertained, impressed and enriched."

New York Post

DON HEWITT: 90 MINUTES ON 60 MINUTES"

for American Masters/WNET/PBS NY

Emmy Award Nomination, Cine Golden Eagle

Getting into the world of '60 Minutes' is like getting inside the world of BBC's 'Panorama'. This is an access based, behind the scenes documentary special on America, and much of the world's, most watched TV news program.

"Tonight's American Masters profile of broadcast journalist Don Hewitt is itself a brilliant piece of broadcast journalism."

New York Daily News, Eric Mink

"Filmmaker Susan Steinberg decided to focus on the process of putting the show together, and she got unprecedented access to do so. What results is a fascinating inside look at famous egos going about the mundane details of their work, fussing and fighting all the way."

Newsweek

"DonHewitt: 90 Minutes on 60 Minutes catches the personality of the man and his creation . . . a smart profile that is also an appreciation of the effort and skill that goes into first-rate television journalism."

The New York Times, Walter Goodman

"Not even Mike Wallace could have done a better job of catching this tiger [Hewitt] in the middle of one big roar."

TV Guide, The Robins Report

"GOLD FEVER"

WGBH Boston/PBS 'The American Experience' & Co-Producer Channel 4 UK 'Secret Histories'

Shot entirely on location in the Klondike and Alaska . Produced and filmed, through all four seasons, the film chronicles the triumph of optimism in the face of man's follies and the desperate condition of harsh reality.

"A wonderfully evocative film, telling of a human endeavour that lurked between the noble and the clinically mad . . . "If you're not there, you're not alive," ran one newspaper headline of the time. It was almost true."

The Daily Express [London]

"An elegant film."

The Independent

CREW BIOS



REBECCA HARDY | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Rebecca Hardy is a Writer, Director & filmmaker who has created over 300 documentaries, dramas and independent films. Her work has been broadcasted on BBC, Channel 4, Teachers TV and a range of Music and European channels.

Her dramas and viral programmes have been nominated for and won a number of industry awards including John Hefin Award for Short Film made in Wales (2015), Best Drama at the Royal Television Awards (central) 2014, BBC newcomer Award (BF&TV Festival), IVCA, CIPR and US International Film and Video Festival.



KATHLEEN SORIANO | NARRATOR

Kathleen Soriano joined the National Portrait Gallery in 1989 as Head of Exhibitions & Collections where she oversaw some of its most successful exhibitions - Mario Testino, Lord Snowdon, Henri Cartier Bresson, Annie Liebovitz and Helmut Newton.

Appointed Director of Exhibitions at the Royal Academy in 2009, she curated projects such as Bronze, David Hockney, Van Gogh and Degas. She independently curated the Anselm Kiefer RA retrospective in September 2014, and her broadcast activities have included the three series of Portrait/Landscape Artist of the Year for Sky Arts.



NICK WATSON | EDITOR

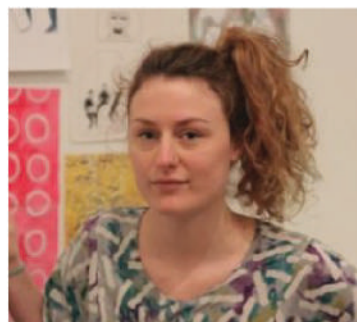
Nick Watson is a London based Filmmaker and Editor. He directed the acclaimed documentary The Man Who Shot Beautiful Women and co-created Choose Your Own Documentary, an award winning interactive show.

He has spent many years directing and editing factual TV and web content for companies such as the BBC and ITV through to independent films and advertising agencies. He is currently directing an online film series for the Royal Academy, training editors on FCP X at the BBC and developing programmes for BBC4.



DAVID CHILTON | DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

For many years David Chilton worked as a camera man for the BBC, and worked with Susan Steinberg as director of photography on The House That Ahmet Built, a film on Ahmet Ertegun, the music impresario and founder of Atlantic Records.



HATTIE LADD | ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

Hattie Ladd has worked producing factual programmes and music videos for the past three years, from small independent productions to the BBC. She comes from an art background and studied a BA in fine art at the University of the Arts, London.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

"Mirrors to Windows" aims to reach out to the creative spirit which resides in each of us, demystifying the elusive artistic practice and making it accessible to a wide audience. This film offers the voices of ten diverse, dynamic and inspirational role models – ten women, across three generations, who are making art work in the 21st century.

There have been many films on the male artist – a well-known protagonist, his archetype has been accepted, celebrated and embraced in popular culture as a romantic ideal, but we are literally missing half the picture. The story of the female artist, filled with the gritty realism of negotiations, commitments, compromise and determination to make their own path through the world, has not been properly told and it is a far more relatable story to both genders. "Mirrors to Windows" puts the lens between art and life to create an intimate collective biography that will stand the test of time.

"Mirrors to Windows" is of today. By casting women from 6 different countries, the film is a window into the 21st century urban world. The film, set in London, could easily take place in New York, Berlin, Amsterdam, Paris and beyond. The cultural diversity of the ten artists is reflective not only of the city of London itself, but of the multi-cultural world we all live in today.

With "Mirrors to Windows", my aim was to make an intimate film about an artist's life. A film that would leave the audience feeling that they were dropping into the artists' studio. With ten main characters, this was not an easy task, yet those who have viewed the film have commented on its intimacy. This was accomplished by a long production schedule. I spent three years filming characters in their studios preparing for and setting up their exhibitions and developing close relationships with each and every one of them. To create an environment, that would lend itself to intimacy, I shot the studio material myself, which is something I had never done before.

Finally, it was important that the film not portray women as underdogs, but rather engage the audience with women who are empowered through their self-esteem, their commitment to their work, their vision and their highly personal approaches to what it means to be an artist and a woman, and to not to be confined in any one role.

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FAQs

1) What inspired you to make "Mirrors to Windows"?

I intended to de-mystify the process of creating art and, as in my other films, to lift up the curtain to show what goes on behind the scenes. The personal is political and it was my intention to make a film about women artists that revealed as much about their lives as it did about their art.

2) How did you cast the artists in the film?

I researched about 150 artists. I had to fall in love with their work first, then I would go and meet them at their studios. We had to have a rapport and a flow of communication. They had to be open and honest with me - otherwise I couldn't have made such a personal film.

3) Why the three ages?

I wanted to make a collective biography which was as much about life as it was about art. I feel that the processes of life and art, and how they reflected in youth, middle age and later in life are very important to the development of an artist. Art is about development and change, and you have to change your life if you're going to change your art, and therefore life's experiences are terribly important. I couldn't think of any better way to show it than in the present tense, and therefore I had to show it in the three ages.

4) What made you choose an all-female cast?

I have made a lot of films about men - Edward R. Murrows, Paul Simon, Ahmet Ertegun - I wanted to make a film about all the amazing women I've known. In my mind it was crucial to integrate the art and the life, and I believe that women often talk about their personal lives more easily than men. It is also interesting that the art world, dominated for so long by men, is undergoing such a change.

5) How did you achieve such a level of intimacy in the film?

To achieve such intimacy in the film I had to do something I had never done before, which was to shoot by myself. I felt that the best way to get these artists to open up about their lives- not just their work -would be to create an atmosphere where they felt comfortable and relaxed, which is not easy with a film crew. I had to gain their trust, making them feel at ease about my aims for the film and how their contributions would be used. I used my training as a psycho therapist to hold conversations in a way that were personal, but never intrusive.

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Photography & media

Women, art and life – through the looking glass...

– July 2015



Jenny Kingsley reviews a documentary film celebrating the creativity of contemporary women artists

Mirrors to Windows, a documentary by Susan Steinberg

Each of the ten women portrayed in Susan Steinberg's documentary, *Mirrors to Windows*, has a unique story to tell about her emergence and establishment as an artist. We share their lives; in the studio, in the office, at the gallery, in the past with family photographs and videos; and listen to their reflections on the evolution of their careers.

Mirrors to Windows is a pleasure to look at, a cleverly composed 'living' collage of real life and artistic experiences, which contrast, complement and fit almost perfectly together, like pieces of a mosaic. It is a work of moving art, far from a 'fly on the wall, let the camera roll' documentary. There is skilful, benign contrivance by the production team, well-crafted editing and fluid shifts back and forth in time, for example. The music – classical, jazz and electronic – enhances the poignancy of the film.

Steinberg stays in the background, acting as a facilitator, gently prompting each woman to reveal and ponder. It isn't surprising to learn that she is training to be a psychotherapist. She radiates calm and candour; she is modest about her achievements as an Emmy award-winning producer and director, whose work has been broadcast internationally and screened at major film festivals. She has tackled a diversity of subjects, including Edward Murrow, an important figure in American broadcast journalism, Paul Simon, the singer-songwriter, the search for gold in the American West, the American novel and the history of Rock 'n' Roll.

Article –

Media



Mirrors to Windows,
Susan Steinberg,
Director, with Jodie
Carey, artist. © SDS
Productions



Mirrors to Windows,
Susan Steinberg,
Director, facing Helaine
Blumenfeld, artist. ©
SDS Productions



Mirrors to Windows,
Rose Wylie, artist. ©
SDS Productions

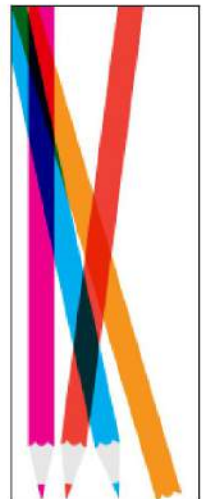


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Background info

Alice Anderson's work is included in 'Memory Movement Memory Objects' at the [Wellcome Collection](#), 22 July–18 October. Jodie Carey's work is on view in the Saatchi Gallery during July, and also at the Whitechapel Gallery 15 July - 6 September.



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Steinberg had always wanted to make a film about creative women. After making a 'short' film featuring Charlotte Hodes, one of the artists in *Mirrors to Windows*, she determined to 'make a big film about women, art and life'. It took four years, from casting to final production. An original list of 150 women artists was whittled down to those who could express their feelings about the relationship between their lives and their work in a meaningful context.

Sarah Lederman, the youngest artist here, is a painter. A 'really good degree show' helped to launch her establishment as an artist. Self-portraits are her inspiration.

I don't really think of them as portraits. I can manipulate them to look like how I want them to look like and have my face at exactly the right tilt...I don't have to shout at anyone as well for moving, and I can change things. I don't think they really look like me.

Jodie Carey originally wanted to work with textiles, but was eventually drawn to sculpture. *Goldsmiths had quite an alpha male vibe going on, and I actually came from textiles. I swapped courses, very female, all female... I had to quit and reapply because the fine art people don't consider the textile people artists. I dug my heels in and I managed to get in. I mean you have to have self-belief, don't you?*

Some of her work could be described as ceremonial. Memorial slabs adorned with wreaths and ivy, made from newspaper stained with blood, tea and coffee spring to mind.

'My life is based around my work,' states Alice Anderson, who grew up in Algeria and France. She used to make films; now she concentrates on sculpture. Alice winds copper wire around objects, which look mummified. One assemblage of objects includes a dummy's head, a child's guitar, a tool and a moustache shape.

Charlotte Hodes is a painter, ceramicist, and creator of vibrant, colourful collages of silhouettes, filigree and floral compositions, which look as if they are about to come to life. Hodes' revelations will resonate with many women.

The first time I started collaging was after I'd had children. I thought damn it...now my creativity was going into the children... I became much more openly sort of aggressive about it. I had very little time in the studio. I would rush into the studio and want to close a door and think, oh, I want to do some work, and what do I do? And it was so difficult and challenging and frustrating. And I didn't know what to do, so I started cutting up my drawings... lots and lots of drawings, drawings from drawing books, drawings that were lying around, pieces of paper, old etchings... It was a kind of a desperation.

American-born Helaine Blumenfeld, a sculptor, recalls when

the British Museum was doing a big show of Cleopatra and they asked me if I'd be interested in doing something...I had the idea that Cleopatra isn't about her head or her beauty in that way. It's the stance; it's the way she holds herself, the proudness; but it's also the willingness to show a certain vulnerability, which is so feminine. There's no head, because for me modern woman or beauty or power isn't about the head; it's about the way you hold yourself...the way you believe in yourself.

Blumenfeld asserts that 'there's no greater paradox than the demands made on you as an artist and the demands that are made on you as a mother...' As Blumenfeld matures she finds that she is 'accepting more and more risks, rather than moving away from them... Artists seem to live longer than anyone else.'

Nermine Hamman is an Egyptian photographer and digital artist. She talks about the gender politics of the Egyptian Revolution and how when she was taking pictures of soldiers at the time 'if it was a man taking a picture, probably it would be more threatening. But as a woman...Ah, look at this woman, she looks like a foreigner. Let her take pictures...'

Susan Collins is the director of the Slade School of Fine Art. She works with digital media, mostly in response to sites and situations. When Collins was a student at the Slade, arriving for her assessment with reams of printouts of drawings – digital media enable drawings to be saved and remodelled on the page – people asked, 'but is it art?' Years later Collins helped to establish electronic media study at the Slade.

Aging can be a relief in an artistic context, reveals Almuth Tabenhoff. *Before I might have sort of thought, oh, I need to fit in. If you are pre-50, you think, oh, maybe I need to sort of make work that might get me the Turner Prize or whatever. It gives you this freedom.*

Miliheh Afnan was born in Palestine to Persian parents. She now lives in England. Her work includes portraits of imaginary people and patterns on paper and other materials with images resembling letters. She patiently explains why she lays gauze over the text – to evoke the idea of veiling interiors, what is inside human beings.

Rose Wylie appears as the essence of impishness blended with unpretentiousness; these senses infuse her work. Her *oeuvre* could strike one as improvised drama. She features people and objects, boldly, hugely and simply drawn, sometimes with words floating in the background. Her late husband was a painter; long ago they agreed that she would cook the supper for the family, put her painting on hold, and he would paint.

Hopefully Steinberg will make more films featuring intimate and frank portraits of contemporary women artists. The tender realism of her work deserves a wide public.

This article first appeared in Cassone: The International Online Magazine of Art and Art Books in the July 2015 issue.

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There will be a screening of the film, followed by a Q&A, at the National Portrait Gallery on the 21 January 2016. Tickets will be available in November.

Mirrors to Windows will be available as a DVD later this year. It is available for screening. Contact sdsprodteam@hotmail.com and refer to www.mirrorstowindows.com for further information. *Mirrors to Windows* was screened on International Women's Day, 8 March, at the Royal Academy, and 'sold out'. In June, it was also shown at the London College of Fashion (where Jenny Kingsley viewed the film) and sold out.



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http://www.latundra.com/mirrorstowindows_susansteinberg/

Susan Steinberg

Behind the Mirror

Susan Steinberg is the producer/director behind the documentary *Mirrors to Windows: The Artist as Woman* which portrays ten women artists who manage to transform their inner world into an aesthetic experience that can be shared, reinvented and understood.

Emmy and Peabody award-winning filmmaker Susan spent over four years filming this documentary that invites us on a journey into the lives of three generations of international artists.

Interview: Ana Rivadulla Crespo & Adelaida Monguillot*

Photo: Adelaida Monguillot

The first thing that strikes you when you meet with Susan is her ability to listen. She does so with such genuine curiosity that makes you feel like the protagonist of one of her films. She welcomes you into her life as a story worth being experienced, developed and understood, as if she wanted to get to know your inner and outer world in order to transform static mirrors into playful windows where the soul can travel with its different personalities, landscapes and sounds.

The second thing one finds fascinating while talking to Susan is how she remembers what you told her long ago, and how her memory not only remembers, but it remembers with a mind that continues to nurture your story. Her infectious enthusiasm transforms your memories into a filmic and narrative experience, in which that story always finds a reparative relationship. And that is when you realise that Susan uses her experience as a psychotherapist in filmmaking.

Susan Steinberg spent over four years filming her latest documentary film called "Mirrors to Windows", an intimate and dynamic journey into the lives of three generations of international artists that represent the "Artist as Woman" living and working in London. They are Maliheh Afnan, Alice Anderson, Helaine Blumenfeld OBE, Jodie Carey, Susan Collins, Nermin Hamman, Charlotte Hodes, Sarah Lederman, Almuth Tebbenhoff and Rose Wylie RA.

Susan is best known for her work on the American PBS TV series American Masters. Born in Chicago, she lived and worked in New York City for many years where she produced and directed documentaries on seminal people in the world of culture and the arts such as Edward R. Murrow, Paul Simon and Ahmet Ertegun, the founder of Atlantic Records.

Since she moved to the UK in 2004, she has been training in psychotherapy at the Tavistock Centre, teaching filmmaking at Universities and making independent documentary films. During our interview, she told us that her first independent half-hour film was on one of the artists portrayed in *Mirrors to Windows*:

"I was a foreigner in England and I wanted to make this film but I didn't know any artist except for my friend [the artist] Pat Kauffman who introduced me to Charlotte Hodes. I was invited to the opening of her solo exhibition at the Wallace Collection and I was struck by how her process doing collage was so similar to my process of film editing -which in French is called 'montage'. I thought: 'Well, here is a title: 'Collage to Montage'. I made this film over eighteen months, filming Charlotte whilst she was getting ready for her first solo show at the Marlborough Fine Art gallery in London"- she says.

Upon completion of this short film that showed at the Marlborough Gallery, she realised that it represented the beginning of a feature film she had always wanted to make.

Susan closes *Mirrors to Windows* with French filmmaker Agnès Varda's quote: "The tool of every self-portrait is the mirror. You see yourself in it. Turn the other way, and you see the world".

She explains: "All along I had wanted to make a film that combined elements of art, psychology and sociology as related to the journey of a creative woman throughout life. I took my experience of making biographies to make what I call a 'collective biography', a biography that looks at these twenty-first century, contemporary women, from all ages, and shows how they reflect our societies today. To do this, it needed to be a multicultural reflection". It is for this reason that the women in this film come from Cairo, France, Germany, Lebanon, the United States and the United Kingdom.

It took her nine months to find the artists who appear in this film. Susan exchanged the help of interns in exchange for sharing her experience as a filmmaker. That was how, thanks to a university student who was very familiar with the art scene in the UK, she looked at the work of two-hundred artists, meeting with approximately fifty of them:

"Selecting the right artists was crucial. Several artists didn't want to be in the film when they understood that it was going to be not just about their art work, but personal". Other criteria for selection were artistic and cultural diversity and age: "I wanted people from twenty-two to eighty-two. These were the criteria from the start".

Susan did not stop filming until October 2014, and in January 2015 *Mirrors to Windows* was chosen by the Royal Academy of Arts to become part of their historic first celebration of International Women's Day.

Susan often talks about her personal journey and what she learnt whilst making this film: "One of the reasons I was able to make this film was because I had had so many similar experiences to the artists in the film, from youth to today. I am dyslexic like Sarah Lederman; I am obsessive when I'm working like Jodie Carey and Alice Anderson. Although I didn't have children I was always juggling and struggling to balance family, career and work like Charlotte Hodes and Nermine Hamman. I also identify with what sculptor Almuth Tebbenhoff said in the film when asked about life after sixty: 'It's fantastic! It gives you this freedom!'".

Susan says that it has been a challenging process, not only because she lost her partner for life two years ago (Ian Geoffrey Bodenham, former BBC and National Geographic filmmaker and photographer) but also because she has been the only consistent person in her team: "Under normal circumstances I would have had an associate producer from the beginning to the end, but because I was working with interns and I didn't have a budget, my team was extremely disparate. I would say that the person who stayed with me the longest was a young woman named Raphaella Fearn. She was a multi talented design student at Goldsmiths and she started as a summer intern and ended up helping with just about everything for over two years. It is so different making a film when you have a commission. In this case, every time someone with I had been working said, for example, 'I have to go because I'm taking a job', I found myself desperate, thinking 'I can't do this, I can't do this alone'. It's really very difficult to find the inner capacity to continue when you don't have the encouragement of outside sources".

Susan explains that the most important thing for her is the creative process, to start with an idea and let it develop without a pre-existing script. "As a documentary filmmaker I rarely start out knowing much more about the subject matter than the average person in the street. The process is the most important thing. You can't get there without all the in-between steps. I work like the artists in the film".

We asked Susan how she feels living and making this film in England. She firmly replies: "The film reflects being a foreigner. Even though I speak the same language, English, I was always aware that I am an immigrant. I am an outsider".

Artists at different ages and at different stages in their careers can find in your documentary a source of inspiration. What would you say to them?

“Jodie Carey said the clearest thing in the film: ‘You have to have self belief because you don’t really get it from anyone else’. I would also say keep working, take risks and don’t be afraid to fail. When I made a film on Paul Simon (‘Paul Simon: Born at the Right Time’) he had recently broken up his singing duo with Art Garfunkel, he had been through a divorce, and he had put out his first solo album that had not been well received. He said that it was at that point that he felt he had nothing to lose. He went to South Africa, and ended up making ‘Graceland’ which changed his career. What he said to me was: ‘There comes a point where optimism is a practical decision’. I have remembered that whenever I felt most discouraged. When I was facing the largest hurdles, I realised that no other choice made sense”.

This film reminds us that our obsessions are not just meaningless repetitive acts but that, through the creative process, they have the potential to be transformed into a real work of art, such as *Mirrors to Windows*.

*Ana Rivadulla Crespo (Spain) lives and works in London as a child and adolescent psychiatrist and as a psychodynamic psychotherapist.

Adelaida Monguillot (Argentina) lives in London and is one of the members of the musical trio 3 Argentinas @3argentinas



Mirrors to Windows: The Artist as Woman

A film by Susan Steinberg

This feature documentary follows and explores the lives of 10 women artists, from the youngest, aged 22, to the oldest, Rose Wylie, aged 82. After three years filming in the various artists' studios in London, and following some on location, Emmy award-winning filmmaker, Susan Steinberg, tells the story of three generations of artists as

hair, imported from China. "I was quite interested in using the dolls' hair as thread and a thing to bring tension or to attach things and I thought the material was a very interesting thing to use." She has taken to winding wire around familiar objects until they become unfamiliar.

Painter Sarah Lederman, just 2 years out of art college, discusses dyslexia and her love of paint. "My practice is an exploration into self, fantasy and desires. I am strongly influenced by my childhood fantasies; fairytales, castles and the loss of innocence." She uses her own body as a subject, but is nervous about her father seeing some of her more intimate work.

Charlotte Hoddes is Professor in Fine Art at London College of Fashion, UAL. She is also a collage and ceramics artist and, in the film, she discusses how she happened to go from painting to collage; her intricate paper-cuts were described as, "painstakingly beautiful," by Dame Rosalind Savill, former Director of the Wallace Collection, for whom she was the first Associate Artist making papercuts & ceramics in response to 18th century *fête galante* paintings and Sèvres porcelain.

Director of The Slade and digital media artist Susan Collins discusses how her art took shape, while still teaching.

Maliheh Afshar is a Persian Palestinian artist who 'writes' her paintings with Islamic-style markings,

although they are pure invention. She also talks about the central theme of the veil in her work.

Nermine Hammam is a Cairo-based visual artist making densely-composed figurative, heavily-digitised prints, using the Arab Spring and the Egyptian Revolution and subsequent riots, as well as gender politics, as a background to her work.

Helaine Blumenfeld discusses the competing demands in the life of a woman and mother as an artist. She recently installed the 4m high Petracchi marble *Tempeta 2012* outside the Lancasters, Hyde Park, where a four-bedroom apartment costs a cool £16,500,000. Invited by the City of Pietrasanta in recognition of her work, she was honoured with a solo exhibition in October 2011 in the *Fiarzza del Duomo* as well as displaying more than fifty sculptures inside the *Chiesa di S. Agostino*.

Almuth Tebbenhoff, a German-born sculptor likes nothing more than working in steel. Her *Sinnat* was installed in the Napoleon Garden in Holland Park in 2014.

Rose Wylie RA rounds off this insightful, edifying, sympathetic and intimate film, that explored inter-generational perspectives on women in the arts, with an indomitable spirit that would shame a woman a quarter of her age.

Don Grant