
Coda: In Love, Anger, and Loss

Barbara Hammer and Carolee Schneemann

ABSTRACT This article is an homage to two powerful women who were lost to us in 2019, as this journal issue was under way. Feminist film pioneers and superstars Barbara Hammer and Carolee Schneemann were both interviewed by Alexandra Juhasz for her *Women of Vision* project in the late 1990s. In 2017, now both approaching eighty years of age, both were enjoying major retrospectives in New York, and so Juhasz interviewed them again. In this text, Juhasz intercuts the four conversations, conducted over the course of twenty-five years, in an intergenerational, time-traveling retrospective in which Hammer and Schneemann comment on their own former and current laments and visions for the future. **KEYWORDS** Barbara Hammer, Carolee Schneemann, experimental film, feminist film, lesbian cinema

In 2017, two of the oldest women I had interviewed for my *Women of Vision* documentary—at the time of the initial project in their mid-fifties (as am I now), and in 2017 both approaching eighty—were enjoying major retrospectives in New York, where I had recently returned to teach at CUNY. I decided that it made sense to re-interview them, given that they were currently being celebrated.¹ I spoke to Barbara Hammer and Carolee Schneemann at their respective homes in New York, and we discussed their new work, their large shows, and our past conversations. I published the interviews online.² In many ways, those rather spontaneous revisits inspired this special issue of *Feminist Media Histories*.

In 2019, both women died.

History, revision, film, activism, and feminism are related and loving efforts that take place within community and media. Here I offer a re-edit of our newer interviews intercut with the older ones as a coda to this special issue.³ History, film, feminism, and activism are connected to death as well as life. We are all committed to what continues because of our history making, revision, and revisitation, and because of the special affordances of film, activism, and feminism. I end with reverence. This is an idiosyncratic personal essay

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compiled from four interactions that I lived with two wonderful artists. It is an homage to these powerful women, in their own words. It is a tribute to the larger power of feminist media, art, and history.

Their loss is immeasurable. Their contributions ongoing.

I appreciate so many things about these words and the women who spoke them: their intelligence and courage, their humor. But in this instance, I most want to acknowledge how neither Hammer nor Schneemann was ever rosy-eyed or falsely optimistic. On the contrary, in these intercut fragments both women express struggle as instrumental—struggle with patriarchy, sure, but also with feminists, and even feminist academics. They both willingly address the motivating and also debilitating nature of illness, pain, and disease. And they remind us of the definitive cycling(s) of feminism: periods of quiet and action, and as critically, points of resolution. It turns out (at least for now) that several significant things with which they struggled are no longer such daunting issues. Those particular struggles have been done, well, by them and us: more knowledge of past female filmmakers and artists has been learned and disseminated, more attention to feminist media has been enjoyed, and some real volume of feminist response has circulated. The project of feminist media history is not over, of course, but rather always ours to do and share, as did they. As Schneemann observes, feminist activist media and its history—like life and death—is an abyss and an inspiration, one for which I thank these beloved women. In Schneemann's words:

It's absolutely essential that we don't lose the struggle of this history. The horrible thing is—especially for people of my generation—that it fucking never ends! You have to do it again and again. We already did that work. But, yes, again and again. And with as much risk, and certainly in 1995, without any kind of political focus or organization. It's a terrifying abyss.

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ 2017: Barbara, so much has happened and so much time has passed since we talked twenty years ago. But in another sense, here we are, the same two gals [*both laugh*] doing what we do, right?

BARBARA HAMMER 2017: Doing what we do. Finally getting recognized. When I re-watched my video interview with you for the book *Women of Vision* (2001), shot in 1995, I was surprised that everything I said about my aesthetic back then is still my aesthetic: making moving images on the screen and bringing the perception of the audience to the screen through their own body and skin.

AJ 2017: Hi Carolee, it's so nice to see you after so many years. I can't wait to talk with you about your large and significant retrospective, *Kinetic Painting*, currently showing at MoMA PS1 in New York. I also want to use this as a chance to revisit



FIGURE 1. Barbara Hammer in *Women of Vision* (dir. Alexandra Juhasz), 1998.



FIGURE 2. Carolee Schneemann in *Women of Vision* (dir. Alexandra Juhasz), 1998.

an interview we did twenty years ago because that seems the perfect amount of time to reflect upon your ongoing work and life as an aging, powerful feminist artist. The magnitude of your retrospective—literally how much space it takes up (ten rooms) and how many objects are there—is wonderful.

CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN 2017: It's thee hundred elements!

AJ 2017: And likewise the amount of time it covers (more than sixty years). How do you think it affects our understanding of your work to see it in such an expansive context?

CS 2017: It enlarges understandings of my aesthetic motives. It broadens my context away from the suffocating, annoying two works for which all the other works have been mislaid, namely the performances *Interior Scroll* (1975) and *Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions for Camera* (1963) and their subsequent documentation. I found the adulation over these two works hostile to my larger feminist project because it sexualized the whole body of work.

AJ 2017: So you are saying that even though your work was eventually, if perhaps belatedly, canonized within art and film history, for a long time it was appreciated for only a small prism of your feminist activity, which focuses on the representation of your own sexuality and body.

CS 2017: Yes, a very narrow prism: the ghetto of feminism: “You can have this erotic, even prurient dynamic in your work that we are going to pay attention to, but the rest of it is too astonishing, complex, and beyond our need to control how we characterize women’s work.”

AJ 1995: Barbara, in my teaching I frequently use your article “The Politics of Abstraction” in *Queer Looks* (1993) to speak about the debates over essentialism in your career.⁴ Can you talk about the institutionalization of feminist film theory and its effects on your work?

BH 1995: I studied film theory in graduate school. I read *Screen* magazine. I read Christian Metz in Xerox copies before he was published. I knew about signs and signifiers. But when I first heard that my work was being called “essentialist,” I didn’t know what that meant. As the *Camera Obscura* women returned from their studies in Paris in the 1970s and brought back one criterion for “good feminist film,” my work became *déclassé*. Seemingly it identified a biological woman on-screen as if all femininity occurred in biology rather than in culture. This nature-culture issue is older than feminist film theory. Feminist critics swung very far to the right in terms of anti-essentialism in the 1990s. In the late 1980s, when post-modern deconstruction became *de rigueur* and people were studying questions about authorship and appropriation, theory entered into my work in a big way. It was exciting: these were great ideas and interesting material to work with. Now, there’s a return to the body. Theory, like art, swings. It goes too far one way, causes a reaction, and swings back the other way. After Abstract Expressionism, you had Pop art, and after that, theoretical work, and then in this year’s Whitney Biennial, abstraction and narrative.

AJ 2017: Carolee, my experience of your retrospective was that I perceived your extensive output across media and time as clearly working through a larger set of linked questions: patriarchal state violence and the role the media plays in it, loss and mourning, feminist ecological politics and power, bestiality, and then formal questions about kinesis and collage. Not simply questions about your body and sexuality, which is where your work has been celebrated but also pigeonholed and reduced. You said twenty years ago something much more complex about your motives: “I was negotiating a universe that denied me authority as an authenticating voice, and denied me the integrity of my own physicality. This declivity, ‘No Pronoun, No Genital,’ became the tripod upon which my own vision would be balanced.” So it seems that the genital has been given to you, but the pronoun perhaps not. Your work has allowed for a change in feminism in the United States where a sex-positive agency for women is no longer so surprising. But women still are questioned about the authenticity of our voices.

CS 2017: Yes, but both were conflicted. The genital was definitely a marginalized, hyper-feminized aspect of what I could show and bring forward. The problem there had to do with a certain feminist critical determinance where all the genital work was considered prurient and playing back into male hands. It was quite a while until it became okay to be a feminist-centralist. I was said to be lacking so many things: the abjections, the masquerade, Marxism. So the work was highly suspect in many feminist domains where I expected it would be accepted and of use. That was very painful. I was used to the macho stuff, but I was always astonished at the punishing exclusions of a lot of feminist criticism.

AJ 2017: You talked about that twenty years ago. But feminists are embracing you now.

CS 2017: Well, the larger questions that have always been central to my work—about gender, ecology, militarism—have increased in our world. They are bigger, and more monstrous, and more suppressive, and also more diverted in this culture of consumerism and confusion. While there are now a plethora of women working with the body, and many of them young female artists, that’s not enough now.

AJ 2017: Barbara, twenty years ago I asked you about your place in feminist film history. You were around fifty-five, and you said: “I hope that work will be seen as a progression of sophistication and development as it traces one lesbian’s life in the second half of the twentieth century. This is a space now filled, where before there was a lack, a void. Now I have sisters and brothers around me in queer cinema. I want to keep working with my eyes open, learning from others, going to see new work, trying to do the best I can to develop further my visual language.” What have you done since then to further your visual language?

BH 2017: My retrospective *Evidentiary Bodies* at the Leslie-Lohman Museum brings in all the different branches of my work, from performance to photography to installations to journal keeping to writing and of course 16mm film, Super 8 film, digital film, and video. That's the language: a diverse one that can move in any direction according to the idea or emotional motivation. I think many youth currently in art school are brought up with that language. They don't define themselves as filmmakers like we were taught to do. So maybe we've arrived at the place where a young artist in art school begins from a mindset where everything is available.

AJ 2017: Because of your work and courage, young artists can now come into their voices with a permission to cross in lots of places. The complexity of their gendered sexual raced classed healthed position is part of what they get to play with, and you really did give us a vocabulary and permission to do that, as well as to move across media.

CS 1995: I call it double knowledge: the double knowledge of being a criminal instigator in your own culture, burrowing within to find out what had been denied and hidden. I wondered, Had there ever been other women artists? If so, where were they? And why was I both encouraged and discouraged?

AJ 1995: Why was finding female role models and colleagues so important to you? Why, even now in 1995, do we need both female contemporaries and memories of those women who came before us?

CS 1995: It's what I call "missing precedence." If I don't have a realm of precedence, then I'm anomalous and my experience is constantly marginalized as exceptional in that there's no tradition, there's no history, there's no language. But there *is* history, tradition, and language. It's also part of being able to exist with increased paradox and complexity. Because we live in a culture that's constantly retreating from the variousness of human experiences and trying to recodify and police the variousness of what people actually can know and experience, it's absolutely essential that we don't lose the struggle of this history. The horrible thing is—especially for people of my generation—that it fucking never ends! You have to do it again and again. We already did that work. But, yes, again and again. And with as much risk, and certainly in 1995, without any kind of political focus or organization. It's a terrifying abyss.

AJ 1995: Barbara, what women influenced you?

BH 1995: Maya Deren. She was the first strong female presence on-screen, in directing and in challenging cinematic form. The more I learn more about her as an ambitious, political woman who set up venues for her films in the

United States, the more I respect her. I also question her sexual preference. She worked with women who were lesbians in her films. I'm not sure she didn't have lesbian experiences. I began to look for women in experimental film. I wrote to Jonas Mekas at Anthology Film Archives saying, "Out of thirty people whom you have decided represent 'essential cinema,' only two, Shirley Clarke and Maya Deren, are women." He didn't answer my letter, which went on to say that I would help him to find more. I found Storm de Hirsch. She did a number of very challenging films on Super 8. They were psychedelic and concerned with other realms of reality. There's Sara Kathryn Arledge, whose work is not well known. I interviewed her in Pasadena and had it printed in *Cinema News*. She made six or seven films with glass slides that she painted and burned and etched with smoke. She dealt with questions of representation and gender. She made a film called *What Is a Man* (1958)?

CS 1995: In 1959 I found Simone de Beauvoir. I felt all alone while my sense of gender politics was revealed by *The Second Sex* (1949). Later I found out that there were thousands of other women all alone with de Beauvoir: de Beauvoir just lays it right open. It's crystal clear. Now I understand everything! From de Beauvoir, I can go to Antonin Artaud for other suppressed meanings of the body and its larger extensivity. At the same time, my lover, the composer James Tenney, and I were reading Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Reich. Reich, with de Beauvoir and Artaud, gave me permission to begin to introduce the body into a literal space. But there weren't any other women. I want to make that absolutely crystal clear. The young women were in a kind of fog. I began to work with the Judson Dance Theater in 1961. This was even before there was a Judson Dance Theater, but there was this coming together of young dancers, almost all women: Yvonne Rainer, Deborah Hay, Trisha Brown, Elaine Summers, Lucinda Childs, Ruth Emerson, Judith Dunn. We knew that no one was going to take over the meaning of the body and new forms of motion except us. It was proto-feminist. We were getting a lot of power from one another. We were very conscious of the meanings that women were going to discover and construct together, or in formal falling-outs.

AJ 1995: When did film enter this for you?

CS 1995: I came to film through Stan Brakhage, and through him I met Maya Deren. That was a horrible lesson. I saw a beautiful, fierce woman praised for important work who was also trying to raise money to pay lab bills and having all these guys live off her! She was not just an inspirational artist; she was simultaneously a mother figure. The young men would go to her and expect her to inspire them, confirm their work, show them what she was doing and thinking, and cook! I decided that whatever this is about, I was not going to cook. I ended up cooking,

of course, but heterosexuals usually have to cook—that's part of the deal for your pleasure.

AJ 1995: Some lesbians have to cook, too.

BH 2017: When I made *Superdyke* (1975) and *Women I Love* (1976), images of radical lesbians were unseen. Now there are a lot of punk lesbians making work that is raunchy and wild and sexual, and trans work that is on the cutting edge of what is permissible to see.

AJ 2017: Your work has been part of a larger queer cultural conversation that has allowed for traction around sexuality and sexual identity, but it seems from our conversation so far that perhaps less traction has occurred around health. Do you want to reflect upon some of your work about women's bodies, illness, and biology?

BH 2017: *A Horse Is Not a Metaphor* (2009) traces my experiences of going through chemotherapy, which is quite a drastic experience of the body because you're poisoning it. I really wanted to enable people to feel from inside me experiencing cancer and chemotherapy and to communicate who I am emotionally through that, like Maya Deren did. *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1945) was the first time I saw a women's cinema, a woman putting her body on the screen. But not just her body—it was from the inside out and she used imagination, imaginative play, symbols. That was always a keystone film. It was the only film by a woman that I saw in my career as a film student.

AJ 2017: Carolee, you've said that as a girl growing up, as a young woman, and well into your career, you weren't allowed to see and you needed to see. Do you think that one of the legacies of your work is the permission to see?

CS 2017: Yes. Absolutely. Go absolutely where they tell you you should not be, but protect yourself because you are always prey. Always.

AJ 2017: Barbara, twenty years ago when we last spoke, you said that a young woman entering the world is denied women's expression of women's experience. Now there's work to see and she can find it. Today your work enters a much larger field of production that you in fact initiated and inspired and were a catalyst for.

BH 2017: I recently saw an Instagram post by a talented artist, Emily Roysdon, who asked: "Why are all these old women getting their retrospectives now?" Judith Bernstein, Carolee Schneemann, myself, Carmen Herrera at the Whitney. Why now? She supposes that it's because we are postmenopausal and a nonthreat to the patriarchal powers that be. No longer young, energetic, sexy.

AJ 2017: I think you're still energetic and sexy. And I think you're still a threat! That's one of your unique gifts as a human being and as an artist: the energy that you have, regardless of your age. Your art is about enlivening yourself, always knowing that you will also be engaging with an audience, a community, a back-and-forth of energy.

BH 2017: I remember when I was working on *Psychosynthesis*, a 1975 film that's just been restored by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and in the film I'm shown turning the rewind through 16mm film saying, "Art is energy art is energy art is energy." Of course I feel it even more with less energy, dealing with illness, which takes some of my energy, and with age, since I need to rest in between things. But it's still there, my energy. Here we are, as I knew we would be in this conversation where the spark is lit. And we're going back and forth.

AJ 2017: Carolee, what you model is the uncontained power of being a woman who is constantly being diminished by male violence yet nevertheless stays the course. Yes, everything in patriarchal culture is trying to suppress the power of our female bodies and intelligence all the way through our lives. Your work shows it over and over and over again, and yet you continue.

CS 2017: Well, I am allowed to lie down. I have to take a lot of naps.

AJ 2017: That's why I said, "Perhaps it's okay for you not to have to put on the costume." It's okay for a woman of your age, stature, and beauty to be in the world just as you are.

CS 2017: My costume is to wake up and see how much pain I'm in, and what I can I do about it. My costume is to take the bowl beside the bed that I have to pee in several times in the night and empty it so that I don't share it with somebody who's coming in or out. To get in the shower, that's wonderful and amazing, to get washed. Not to examine my deformed body so much. To get dressed. Only then am I in my costume. I don't feel that I'm at an obvious disadvantage getting older in my costume.

AJ 2017: I understand.

CS 2017: Maybe. Here's part of my costume [pulls a pink furry object from one cup of her bra and shakes it at Alex]. It's a cat toy. I don't want to share that with everybody.

BH 2017: Sometimes when I talk about death and dying, people call it morbid. But they only call it morbid because it's an invisible subject, an elephant in the room. Unless the person with illness brings it up, or you're a close friend, it's not talked about, and so often not depicted in artwork.

AJ 2017: Carolee, I talked with Barbara recently about her New York retrospective *Evidentiary Bodies*. Your work, her work, other work of women of your generation has permitted a visibility and visibility of female sexuality. Seeing women's sexuality is now permitted. But other bodily experiences of women such as illness and aging are still not yet so visible or so permissible. Yet everyone ages and everyone gets ill.

CS 2017: Barbara was able to work with it?

AJ 2017: Yes, Barbara has produced several bodies of work around her cancer, for example, *A Horse Is Not a Metaphor*.

CS 2017: I have a big cancer work, the video installation *Plague Column* (1996). It works with a whole realm of imagery from medieval churches. It's very fierce; the woman depicted are witches and their breasts are being stabbed with swords by righteous Christians. *Plague Column* has not yet been carefully examined and looked at.

AJ 1995: Speaking of video, what are your thoughts on video and its shelf life? In preparation for this video documentary, *Women of Vision*, I've been watching early feminist video. I was at the Long Beach Museum of Art Video Annex, and a lot of the videotapes in their archive have deteriorated, and you can't watch them now. As my generation is getting excited about reclaiming this history, the history itself is dissolving. So I have to ask: What were your thoughts about your works as permanent documents, as you were making them, since they were shot on video?

CS 1995: We hoped that they would at least have the permanence of a human life. We didn't have information then about how the material itself would disintegrate. We also had the illusion that all these early technologies would be communal and that we would have constant access to shared cameras and editing decks. Of course, it's been a huge disillusionment for all of us that we don't all have access.

BH 2017: Why does everything come through for women late in life? I'm seventy-nine, and this new retrospective is not going to further my career. What if I had been recognized for some of the drawings, writings, paintings, collages, earlier? How might that have broadened my work?

AJ 2017: In *Women of Vision*, twenty years ago, Carolee is pretty bitter. She mentions that by that time in her life all of her male peers—of her generation, of her movement—had already had retrospectives and she still hadn't. Retrospectives allow for more attention, more support, and thus more work. And when I

interviewed you then, Barbara, you said, “I need to grow into owning what I’m owed: respect, a place in history, a chance to tell my history, support to publish my autobiography, and to go into those journals.”

BH 2017: Oh my. That has all been accomplished! Every bit of it in twenty years. That is amazing. I feel very gratified. So, I don’t mean to say that I’m not happy to have a retrospective that shows more than my moving image work. But I don’t know.

AJ 2017: We must hope that your acclaim today produces a new condition where a woman artist in the future will get this kind of deserved support when she actually earns it.

BH 2017: In her thirties, in her forties, in her fifties.

AJ 2017: There’s another approach to Emily Roysdon’s thought puzzle. I think in some ways older women are the *biggest* threat.

BH 2017: Yes, we can say anything we want to say.

AJ 2017: And we’re at the height of our power. Don’t you feel like you’re at the height of your power?

BH 2017: Yes, and I don’t have to play nicey-nice; I don’t have to go by social rules. I can wear anything I want, say anything I want, charm or be disagreeable according to my mood.

AJ 2017: Carolee, earlier in this conversation you said that part of your project—to own and manifest your own sexuality—gets turned back on you even by the people who love you the most. In this way, by only acknowledging you through your sexuality, you are minimized.

CS 2017: No, not by the people who love me the most. The people who love me ambivalently.

AJ 2017: This is such an important insight about your feminist work and legacy, and a very painful one. Is it possible to *not* diminish or simplify that part of the project, the body work, the representation of female sexuality, which is so essential to your work and so essential to the needs of women?

CS 2017: It is as variable as women’s experience. There are aspects of sexuality that I’ve always had to fight for that are not available erotic experiences for lots of women. There’s just so much variation that I cannot represent more than the area I know well.

AJ 2017: Barbara, I wonder what has changed across this back-and-forth over time. For instance, in the interview that I did with you years ago, you said to me: “There’s often danger involved in my films. I like to take risks because I feel that it’s part of lesbian filmmaking. Being a lesbian was risk-taking, at least when I came out.” Is it still risk-taking for you to be a lesbian and a lesbian filmmaker?

BH 2017: Um, no, it’s not.

AJ 2017: Isn’t that exciting?

BH 2017: Yeah, it is, to see the change in my lifetime. I’m so happy.

AJ 2017: Congratulations! To us all!

BH 2017: The biggest risk I’m taking right now is with my body. I’m in an experimental trial. It may be a placebo or a chemo pill. I feel I’m risking my life now.

AJ 2017: That’s the same courage you needed to be an out lesbian representing your experiences before it was allowed or seen, and also the courage you had as a woman artist. But you also have your needs. Twenty years ago I asked you what you wish for, and you said, “I hope that before I die I can start a Barbara Hammer Fund for lesbian filmmakers who use experimental form in their work and do not replicate the status quo.” [*Hammer laughs*] You laugh because—

BH 2017: —because I did it! I can’t believe I said that twenty years ago!

AJ 2017: Then: “I would love to have a larger budget. I would love to share the load. I have to do everything myself.”

BH 2017: The Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University is sending me an editor next week to help me finish my first three-screen films.

AJ 2017: Hoorah! “I wish for health. As you age and see more and more friends with AIDS, breast cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, arthritis. I wish for health because that will give me the energy to continue.”

BH 2017: I have been blessed with twelve years of living with this cancer.

AJ 2017: Carolee, you wanted appreciation when I spoke to you twenty years ago.

CS 2017: What did I say?

AJ 2017: I asked, “I would like to talk to you about the legacy of your work. I want to know what we owe you.”

CS 2017: Oh! I love that part!

AJ 2017: You responded: “You owe me the vulva. You owe me bestiality. You owe me the love of the presence of the cat as a powerful companionate energy. You owe me heterosexual pleasure and the depiction of that pleasure. And you owe me thirty years of lost work that’s never been seen. That’s what you all owe me. I guess what I’m also owed is a living, an income. I am owed the chance to produce the work that I have envisioned, that I have never been able to do. I am owed the chance to preserve the work that already exists. I am glad that you asked. No one has ever asked me. And you can see, I’m fuming underneath.” Now all that has happened. But it seems the outcome is not exactly what you had anticipated or wanted.

CS 2017: I’m thrilled. I’m grateful. I’ve had wonderful assistance and amazing teams at the museums: the confidence, the devotion of the institution. It is just amazing. But part of me isn’t there. Part of me is like, what happened? I can do *anything* and they like it now? *This* matters? I’m very divided. Because once I am in front of a group I have this mysterious complete spirit to communicate with them, and to raise issues. But here on my own, alone with the cat—oh, I don’t know, it’s just so different, so other.

AJ 1995: Barbara, what do you wish for?

BH 1995: I would love to have a larger budget. I would love to share the load. I have to do everything myself. I shoot my own titles. I do my own optical printing. I edit and take my own sound, do my own transfers. There are no labor costs, and I don’t pay myself out of the grant. And I wish for health. I’d love to make a larger-budget film. I’ve taken some directing classes and worked with actors, and I know that I have talent in directing that I have yet to be able to use. I’d like to work with a group of people. Usually, I work as a solitary artist.

AJ 1995: Do you want to talk about ageism?

BH 1995: There’s a transition taking place in my life since the age of fifty. Now I’m a role model. Before, I was just working. Suddenly, I’m looked at with the admiration and respect I’ve wanted. I don’t want to hold back from trying risky things because I’m afraid to fail. Idolization doesn’t help. There has to be a way that the people whom we respect and admire can be colleagues, not isolated. Intergenerational experiences are important to me. I want to be a part of your piercing ceremony, your coming out. I want you to come to my parties, interracially and intergenerationally. When I go to a movie and I’m the only white hair in the audience, it feels lonely. Where is my generation? Where are the dykes I danced with? Are they all professionals who have changed their lives and

won't be seen in public now? When you get older, you feel like the same person you were at thirty, only more articulate with better-formed ideas. You still feel like that playful flirt who is sensitive, who can be hurt by criticisms or brash movements or hurtful comments. You don't walk around knowing what you look like. It's always a bit of a shock when someone relates to you in a way that points out that you have a lot of wrinkles and liver spots and that you are an aging female, when someone doesn't recognize the "you" that is still you inside. It's a curious process, but I'm intrigued to go through it. It's fantastic that we have change. Even death and dying as a process will be a one-time, fresh experience, and one to acknowledge when it comes.

AJ 2017: Carolee, you said previously that the history of your work is one of anger and frustration, and also loss, tremendous loss: "Personal loss, partnership loss, the underlying secret conflict in my lovers between the pleasure and excitement and equity of being with an artist and with their final decision always to move farther and have a traditional marriage. That's a big layer of loss. Of course we lose everything sooner or later, but one would prefer later." And then I replied, "And anger?" And you said, "Well, anger always has a lot to do with human pleasure." So, if loss and anger and pleasure have motivated you, and then the world comes around and says now we support you, it seems like there is a new conflict for you.

CS 2017: Partly this is because I receive the work. I've never done work with the world in mind. It's all lived experience, and lived experience is impermeable. I'm not like a conceptualist who sits down and says, "Well, my gallery wants five of these, I can do that." No, I won't do that. I can't do that. My relationship with my materials is full of uncertainty and mystery. Once I've done a whole sequence of an installation or print or drawings, I have no idea how I did it. I look at them and wonder, "Whoa! How did that happen?!"

AJ 2017: We would love to know that, too! When I interviewed you before, I said, "Tell me about your career in film and video." You answered, "I'm glad you said 'career' because I never considered that I had a career. I don't know what a career is. I imagine that it is something one chooses to do and advance in a certain way, going through certain disciplines."

CS 2017: I am a visionary artist. I wait in a state of receptivity to what is most exclusive or most horrible. As those potential elements build toward a material engagement, then I can work. Then I am very satisfied, even if it's heartbreaking, miserable work.

AJ 2017: You told me a story about a "missing \$400."

CS 2017: What was that? I don't remember that at all.

AJ 2017: You said that your career, your work, your life as a woman and an artist has always been about not having what you needed and having to make do. You said, "I'm trying to get a computer. I still work with a typewriter. My friends are saying you have to get a fax, you have to do this, you have to get a this and a that. But I do it at the bare bones because the culture does not support my work. I don't have a gallery now, so 'it's a case of the missing \$400.'" The \$400 was what you would have needed to buy a camera. Do you still feel that missing support? We are circling around how suddenly having support has altered your experience of yourself as an artist.

CS 2017: Yes! Having support is completely an utter bewilderment and amazement! Also having been ill so that I can't just take the bus to New York and move around freely because I'm too fragile for that. So Lilah, my personal assistant, has to remind me, or I remind myself, that we have to hire a car to go to the city, but that's really expensive. Lilah thinks I should get rid of this old broken couch. I don't want to be one of those weird eccentric old people who have everything broken down all around them and their clothes don't smell fresh. I have to think about the old-age aspect of everything. Propping myself up and getting my disguise organized so that I can go to my public. So that they think that I am forever vibrant and present.

AJ 1995: Would you want young women to be artists? To be filmmakers?

CS 1995: Oh, yes. As many as possible. We should flood the place. To some extent, proportionally, there's now a flourishing of women working to the point where it's also a morass. The mixture of qualities is totally confusing to everyone, volatile and vital. They need as much rigorous information as they can get. It's not enough to have a good idea, or a problem to display and relate.

AJ 1995: Barbara, what is your place in feminist film history?

BH 1995: I hope there's a new language of experiential cinema, where people feel in their bodies what they're watching in a film that's not primarily based in action or intellect. I want people to change places between the screen and their seat while they're watching. I want them to see the camera move fluidly so that they understand the world can be seen upside down, and that that's as valid as right-side up. Gravity happens to be a circumstance that we're forced to comply with. We enter the cinema and see the world freshly, as a child. I want people to see the most humble piece of garbage with fresh eyes, without a prescription for how to see. So that grain of sand William Blake talked about can become a world in itself. And that's my next film.

AJ 1995: What do we owe you?

BH 1995: I need to grow into owning what I'm owed: respect, a place in history, a chance to tell my history, support to publish my autobiography, and to go into those journals. I need to come out in print and be available in other ways since the films have such limited distribution. The world owes those of us who make independent cinema a place in the history of film. We need to break down as national cinema viewers into an international cinema audience. We'll come alive in our seats as we look at new worlds and cultures that we learn to understand. Whole, complex relationships will open for us—instead of that piece of sand or garbage, worlds that we could not understand because we've been such a nationalist country. So, I'll take a MacArthur. A home in the country, a garden for my old age and my horse, Silver. And rollerblades.

CS 1995: Anger always has to go with humor and pleasure. Anger has to be honed; with your biggest iron mallet you take the anger and you go at it long enough so that you can tune it. It has to become funny and outrageous and made back into something aesthetic. It's not good enough on its own. But it's good. ■

Barbara Hammer was born on May 15, 1939 in Hollywood, California. She is a visual artist working primarily in film and video. She has made over 80 moving image works in a career that spans 40 years. She is considered a pioneer of queer cinema.

In 2013 she received a Guggenheim Fellowship for a film *Waking Up Together* on the poet Elizabeth Bishop. She was awarded the same year a Marie Walsh Sharpe artist studio to work on performance projection.

Hammer was honored with a month long retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City from September 11-October 13, 2010. In February 2012 she had a month long retrospective at The Tate Modern in London followed by retrospectives in Paris at Jeu de Paume in June 2012 and the Toronto International Film Festival in October 2013.

Her work is represented by the gallery Koch Oberhuber Woolfe in Berlin, Germany where her first solo exhibition ran from February 11-April 17, 2011 and her third exhibition of collages and drawings in fall 2014.

Generations, 2010 (made with Gina Carducci), and *Maya Deren's Sink*, 2011, her two most recent films won the Teddy Award for Best Short Films at the 2011 Berlinale. Her experimental films of the 1970's often dealt with taboo subjects such as menstruation, female orgasm and lesbian sexuality. In the 80's she used optical printing to explore perception and the fragility of 16mm film life itself. *Optic Nerve* (1985) and *Endangered* (1988) were selected for the Whitney Museum of American Art Biennials ('85,'89,'93). Her documentaries tell the stories of marginalized peoples who have been

hidden from history and are often essay films that are multi-leveled and engage audiences viscerally and intellectually with the goal of activating them to make social change. *Nitrate Kisses* (1992) was chosen for the 1993 Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial. Hammer was a Fulbright Senior Specialist in Fall 2005 at the Bratislava Academy of Art and Design, Slovakia; she received the first Shirley Clarke Avant-Garde Filmmaker Award in October 2006 from New York Women in Film and Television; and the Women In Film Award 2006 from the St. Louis International Film Festival.

In February 2007, she was awarded a tribute and retrospective at the Chinese Cultural University Digital Imaging Center in Taipei, Taiwan sponsored by Women Make Waves Film Festival. The Leo Award from the Flaherty Film Seminar was presented to her in 2008 for making a significant contribution to documentary film. In April of that year, *Diving Women of Jeju-do* premiered at the Seoul International Women's Film Festival where Hammer presented followed by a trip to Beijing where she showed her 1970 lesbian films to a Feminist Seminar and at a new LGTQI Center. In 2011 she was a guest of the 10th Beijing Queer Film Festival. She also traveled to Shanghai and Xi'an to show work at small, unfunded organizations.

Hammer's experimental documentary film on cancer and hope, *A Horse Is Not A Metaphor*, premiered in June, 2008 at the 32nd Frameline International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival in San Francisco and in February, 2009 at DocFortnight at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. It won the Teddy Award for Best Short Film at the 2009 Berlinale and Second Prize at the Black Maria Film Festival. It was selected for Punta de Vista Film Festival in Bilbao, Spain; the Torino Gay and Lesbian Film Festival in Italy; the International Women's Film Festival Dortmund/Koln, and the Festival de Films des Femmes Creteil among others.

In March 2010 her book, *Hammer! Making Movies Out of Sex and Life* published by The Feminist Press at the City University of New York was launched in a performance at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York. A 2010 book tour included The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, California; The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor; the British Film Institute in London, England; the Experimental Film Congress in Toronto, Canada; the University of California at San Diego Visual Arts Department; the San Francisco Cinematheque Crossroads Festival; the Northwest Film Center at the Portland Art Museum, and the Northwest Film Forum in Seattle, Washington.⁵

Carolee Schneemann, multidisciplinary artist. Transformed the definition of art, especially discourse on the body, sexuality, and gender. The history of her work is characterized by research into archaic visual traditions, pleasure wrested from suppressive taboos, the body of the artist in dynamic relationship with the social body. Painting, photography, performance art and installation works shown at Los Angeles Museum of

Contemporary Art; Whitney Museum of American Art; Museum of Modern Art, NYC; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; and most recently in a retrospective at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York entitled “Up To And Including Her Limits”. Film and video retrospectives Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Modern Art, NY; National Film Theatre, London; Whitney Museum, NY; San Francisco Cinematheque; Anthology Film Archives, NYC. She has taught at many institutions including New York University, California Institute of the Arts, Bard College, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Recipient of a 1999 Art Pace International Artist Residency, San Antonio, Texas; Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (1997, 1998); 1993 Guggenheim Fellowship; Gottlieb Foundation Grant; National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts, Maine College of Art, Portland, ME. Lifetime Achievement Award, College Art Association, 2000. Schneemann has published widely; books include *Cezanne, She Was A Great Painter* (1976), *Early and Recent Work* (1983); *More Than Meat Joy: Performance Works and Selected Writings* (1979, 1997). Forthcoming publications include *Imaging Her Erotics*, from MIT Press. A selection of her letters edited by Kristine Stiles is also forthcoming.⁶

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ is chair of the Film department at Brooklyn College, CUNY. She makes and studies committed media practices that contribute to political change and individual and community growth. She is the author of *AIDS TV* (Duke University Press, 1995); *Women of Vision: Histories in Feminist Film and Video* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001); *F Is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing*, coedited with Jesse Lerner (University of Minnesota Press, 2005); *Learning from YouTube* (MIT Press, 2011); *The Blackwell Companion on Contemporary Documentary*, coedited with Alisa Lebow (Blackwell, 2015); and *Sisters in the Life: A History of Out African American Lesbian Media-Making*, coedited with Yvonne Welbon (Duke University Press, 2018). Her current work #100HardTruths-#FakeNews is on and about feminist internet culture, including fake news: scalar.me/100hardtruths and fakenews-poetry.org.

NOTES

1. The shows were *Barbara Hammer: Evidentiary Bodies*, Leslie-Lohman Museum, New York, October 7, 2017–January 28, 2018, <https://www.leslielohman.org/project/barbara-hammer-evidentiary-bodies-2>; *Carolee Schneemann: Kinetic Painting*, MoMA PS1, New York, October 22, 2017–March 11, 2018, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3658>.

2. Alexandra Juhasz, “The Ms. Q&A: Feminist Carolee Schneemann Looks Backward and Forward,” *Ms.*, January 29, 2018, <http://msmagazine.com/blog/2018/01/29/ms-qa-feminist-artist-carolee-schneemann-looks-backward-forward>; Alexandra Juhasz, “In Conversation: Barbara Hammer with Alexandra Juhasz,” *Brooklyn Rail*, December 13, 2017, <https://brooklynrail.org/2017/12/film/IN-CONVERSATION-BARBARA-HAMMER-with-Alexandra-Juhasz>.

3. For purposes of flow in the present piece, I have taken the liberty of implementing some small edits to the preexisting texts, in addition to my intercutting work.
4. Barbara Hammer, "The Politics of Abstraction" in *Queer Looks*, ed. Martha Gever and Pratibha Parmar (New York: Routledge, 1993), 70–75.
5. <http://barbarahammer.com/about/bio>. Accessed July 6, 2019.
6. <http://caroleeschneemann.com/bio.html>. Accessed July 6, 2019.