



EXPERIMENTA

Queer Horror and Experimental Magic Films from the BFI National Archive

For one night only, we present three strange, otherworldly horror artefacts from the BFI National Archive. Inspired by Tony Scott's *The Hunger* and the radical avant-garde, *The Mark of Lilith* (1986) tells the story of Zena, a Black lesbian film researcher who meets Lillia, a white bisexual vampire, at a horror movie. In *Magic Cottage*, aka *Zombie Cottage* (1993), a man drunkenly stumbles into a park's toilets and becomes beholden to a powerful new sexual compulsion. And in *Catherine De Medicis Part 2* (1984), DJ Princess Julia and artist Holly Warburton engage in a shadowy, necromantic rite. These films powerfully illustrate the subversive, political possibilities of horror when working outside the industry and traditional modes of practice.

We look forward to welcoming filmmakers Joe Orr, and Polly Gladwin and Bruna Fionda, for a conversation with BFI National Archive curator William Fowler as part of the event.

The filmmakers on 'The Mark of Lilith'

Bruna and Polly met at The London Filmmakers Co-op and went onto film school together. We set up the group 'Women Challenge Film Education' that brought together women from different colleges. This is how we met Zach. We were all part of a close-knit group of women film students in South London, exploring feminist and lesbian issues.

In 1985 we collaborated to make our graduation film *The Mark of Lilith*. The idea germinated whilst on holiday in Italy. Zach had a thing for vampires; it turned out we all did. We had loved Tony Scott's *The Hunger* (1983) starring Catherine Deneuve, Susan Sarandon and David Bowie. We also paid homage to other vampire films, including *Daughters of Darkness* (Harry Kumel, 1971), based on 16thC Countess Elizabeth Bathory, a prodigious serial killer.

The vampire genre felt open to lesbian feminist subversion, able to tackle and incorporate notions of 'the Other', and a great vehicle for looking at sexuality, race, and gender issues. Barbara Creed's article 'Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection', (*Screen*, 1986), was a strong influence. We explored the notion of patriarchy and the control of women's sexuality in film and mythology through demonising and marginalising the transgressive woman.

Lilith from Jewish folklore was the predecessor to Eve. She was Adam's first very unsatisfactory and unsatisfied wife who refused to lie beneath Adam during sexual intercourse. Lilith ended up as the Lamia demon-woman entering men's dreams, sucking their lifeblood, and sending them 'terrible' fantasies.

We aimed to deconstruct and rescue the vampire from the status of purely aberrant, shifting the onus back onto society and audience expectations. Only

in a misogynist society could female power and sexuality be seen as a threat demanding repression. Our film portrays Lillia's journey to self-awareness.

We found the queer, erotic pleasure of horror enjoyable, but tired of seeing the female as victim and wanted our heroines to challenge that. Lillia had to define her own sexuality. We wanted our audience to feel empowered by our female protagonists. Subverting and challenging the rules of genre was crucial. We latched onto the idea of 'revamping' the vampire genre. 'ReVamp Productions' was born.

We had long conversations with our tutor Laura Mulvey regarding her work on the 'male gaze' and the 'mirror phase'. ('Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Mulvey, *Screen*, 1975). Mirrors are a familiar trope in the vampire genre. Lillia's journey to define her own needs and desires begins when she first glimpses her own reflection.

We borrowed ideas from Brecht and Godard such as 'breaking the fourth wall' for an 'alienation effect'; to hinder the audience from identifying with underlying dominant ideologies and points of view of mainstream cinematic production.

Within the film the 'Man in the Mac' represents the male gaze and its drive to look at and fetishise. We visually stressed his voyeuristic threat to Lillia. We also hoped to give the female audience 'back their pleasure'* through our counter-storytelling while smashing that fourth wall. Zena, our intrepid researcher speaks directly to camera, to reveal how patriarchy informs the language of cinema. The viewer can actively choose to reject those ideologies on a conscious, critical, political level. (*Re: Sally Potter's *The Gold Diggers*, 1983)

The film was made on a tiny budget but we brought in some decent film equipment by an extensive process of begging letters. We ran video making courses for women and used our income on the film. We also received a grant from Lambeth Council. Our main actors were paid! And we paid expenses and fed everyone on set.

We chose locations that resonated with us as filmmakers from the Brixton community. The Ritzy was a key location and owner Pat Foster gave us full access to the cinema. There was an amazing atmosphere when the film was shown there, with rapturous applause to Lillia's line in the taxi 'Take me to The Ritzy.'

The classic vampire sequence was shot at Nunhead Cemetery, a Victorian cemetery with mostly old, unkempt graves. We were locked in for a long night of shooting under a full moon, which proved too much for some of our crew who were so spooked that they escaped over the wall.

We are all listed as directors because we all made the decisions about the direction of the film. Whilst we divided tasks on the shoot, decisions were made collectively. Collaborative working was based on our feminist ideals.

Making *The Mark of Lilith* was exciting! It was a learning process, including working with a budget and schedule that were too tight. Nevertheless, it was well received at the time. It won the Arts Council Student Film and Video Arts Prize, which meant the film toured nationally and internationally. Screenings of the film were organised by our distributors, including several film festivals. Academics have written and continue to write about the film. Lilith has a life of its own and a place in the history of feminist filmmaking.

Short Sharp Shocks Vol 2 Blu-ray booklet (BFI, 2021)

Joe Orr on 'Magic Cottage'

Magic Cottage was shot entirely on Kodachrome Super 8 film in the summer of 1993. It was funded by compensation money from the Royal Mail, after they lost the master tape of my previous short film, *Nelson Mandela Is Not Ugly*. This is ironic, because the master tape of *Magic Cottage* has now also somehow got lost, and what you are watching tonight is a Snappy Snaps DVD conversion of a VHS copy of the original master tape.

In 2008 *The Guardian*, claimed Bruce LaBruce's *Otto* was the first ever gay zombie film. They were wrong. *Magic Cottage* predates that film by 14 years. When it was originally submitted to the BFI Lesbian & Gay Festival it was rejected, as the programmer felt it was somehow a judgemental comment on the AIDS crisis of the time. It wasn't, but once I added the exciting disclaimer at the start clarifying this, the film was accepted for the following year's festival.

The film was a study of sexual addiction, and how like all addictions, the addict becomes a sort of zombie. I shot the film almost entirely alone, just me and the actors, but for the scenes in the public toilet, the *Magic Cottage* itself, I asked for some help. I knew Lynne Ramsay at the time, and she kindly agreed to do the tricky cinematography inside the public toilet itself. I remember her being incredibly focused during what was a very chaotic and frankly amateur shoot; even then she was formidable and very determined to firmly explore her own ideas, and I didn't argue with her. After the shoot I sold her the Super 8 camera used on the film, for £100. I recruited her boyfriend at the time, Marc, to play the footballer in the final sequence, and repaid the favour by helping Lynne out on one of her earliest short experimental films, shot in the garden of Marc's parents' house.

I made two more films after *Magic Cottage* before being pulled away by the more instant allure of DJing.

Joe Orr

Catherine De Medicis Part 2

DJ Princess Julia and artist Holly Warburton engage in a highly theatrical, arcane, necromantic rite. A particularly ornate, gothic exploration of the shadow world, beautifully realised on Super-8.

BFI London Film Festival 2013 catalogue

THE MARK OF LILITH

Directors: Bruna Fionda, Polly Gladwin, Zachary Mack-Nataf

Production Companies: Re-Vamp Productions, London College of Printing

Production Team: Paolo Bazzoni, Sara Chambers, Paul Clarke, Victoria Chapman, Paul Denby, Sheila Eaton, Jimmy Edmonds, Ohna Felby, Bruna Fionda, Linda Flint, Sandy Gilmour, Polly Gladwin, Rachel Gladwin, Sally Hall, Jane Harris, Rosalind Hewitt, Miriam Ludbrook, Zuni Luni, Zachary Mack-Nataf, Cassie McFarlane, Susan Morse, Barbara Nicholls, Claire Palmer, Ingrid Pollard, Paul Preece, Pauline Stride, Hrafnhildur Thorsteinsdottir, Sue Underwood, Wendy Williams, Veronica Wilson

Music: Miriam Ludbrook, Zuni Luni

Post-production: Paul Clarke, Bruna Fionda, Polly Gladwin, Miriam Ludbrook, Zuni Luni, Zachary Mack-Nataf, Paul Preece, Pauline Stride

MAGIC COTTAGE

Director: Joe Orr

Camera: Lynne Ramsay

UK 1993

20 mins

Cast

Pamela Lofton (*Zena*)

Susan Franklyn (*Lillia*)

Jeremy Peters (*Luke*)

Patricia St. Hilaire (*waitress*)

Michael Cudlip (*man in mac*)

Faye Chang, Nallia Chang-Hilliman, Victoria Chapman, Nigel Court, Mick Dwyer, Sheila Eaton, Jimmy Edmonds, Bruna Fionda, Linda Flint, Steve Forster, Angi Friday, Patti Gibson, Polly Gladwin, Sally Hall, Jane Harris, Richard Humphries, Early Jennings, Zachary Mack-Nataf, Laura Mulvey, Claire Palmer, Ingrid Pollard, Hedra Sarid, Pauline Stride, Sue Taylor, Hrafnhildur Thorsteinsdottir, Wendy Williams

UK 1986

32 mins

CATHERINE DE MEDICIS PART 2

Director: Steven Chivers

UK 1984

25 mins

REGULAR PROGRAMME

Seniors: Mandy + intro

Mon 31 Oct 14:00

Relaxed Screening: Pontypool + intro and discussion

Mon 31 Oct 18:10

Woman with a Movie Camera Preview: Cette Maison + Q&A with director Miryam Charles

Mon 31 Oct 20:30

BUG: Video Nasties

Fri 4 Nov 20:45; Fri 18 Nov 20:45

Relaxed Screening: The Fly + intro and discussion

Mon 28 Nov

RE-RELEASES

The Others

From Mon 17 Oct

Poltergeist

From Fri 21 Oct

Nil by Mouth

From Fri 4 Nov (Preview on Thu 20 Oct 20:20; extended intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer at Large on Fri 4 Nov 17:50; intro by Kieron Webb, Head of Conservation, BFI Archive on Mon 7 Nov 18:00)

The Draughtsman's Contract

From Fri 11 Nov (+ intro by Kieron Webb, Head of Conservation, BFI National Archive on Fri 11 Nov 17:50)

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