



EXPERIMENTA

Erase and Forget + What Can I Do with a Male Nude?

Erase and Forget

Directed by: Andrea Luka Zimmerman
©: Erase and Forget Films Limited
An Andrea Luka Zimmerman/Bright Wire Films production
Supported by: The Wapping Project Commissions
With funding from: Women's Playhouse Trust
Developed with the support of: FLAMIN, Arts Council England, New Danish Screen
Additional support from the: CTBF John Brabourne Awards
Executive Producers: Gareth Evans, Meg Clark
Produced by: Andrea Luka Zimmerman, Ameenah Ayub Allen
Associate Producers: Lærke Vindahl, Michael Uwemedimo
Director's Assistant: Therese Henningsen
Written by: Taina Galis, Andrea Luka Zimmerman
This film grew from early collaboration with: Vision Machine (2003-2006), Christine Cynn, Joshua Oppenheimer, Michael Uwemedimo, Andrea Luka Zimmerman
Based on PhD research by: Andrea Luka Zimmerman
Cinematography by: Andrea Luka Zimmerman, Taina Galis, Adam Philp
Additional Camera: Michael Uwemedimo
Edited by: Taina Galis
On-line Editor: Filipe Fernandes
Additional Editing: Andrea Luka Zimmerman, Ariadna Fatjó-Vilas
Titles: Berta Valverde
Colourist: Filipe Fernandes
Original Music: Adam Paroussos
Sound Design: Nick Baldock, Adrian Furdui, Serin Kucuk
Sound Re-recording Mixer: Ben Carr
Foley Editor: James Matthews
Thanks: John Akomfrah, Malcolm Le Grice
With:
Bo Gritz
UK 2017 88 mins

What Can I Do with a Male Nude?

Director: Ron Peck
Production Company:
Greater London Arts Association
Financial Assistance:
British Film Institute Production Board
Executive Producer: Maureen McCue
Producer: James Mackay
Production Manager: Stuart Dollin
Assistant Director: Mark Ayres
Script: Ron Peck
Photography: Christopher Hughes
Lighting: James Mackay, Mark Ayres
Editors: Peter Cartwright, Christopher Hughes
Costumes: William Pierce
Music: Julian Wastall
Sound Recording: Steve Farrar
Cast:
John Levitt (the photographer)
John Brown (the model)
UK 1985 24 mins
Total running time 140 mins

+ Andrea Luka Zimmerman and James Mackay (via Zoom) in conversation with BFI National Archive curator William Fowler

Two films from the BFI National Archive explore the charged and imagistic power of the 1980s Hollywood action hero alongside the complex representation of the male nude. These bold artefacts return us to an era that celebrated and visually pawed gun-toting, oiled, muscular hunks, yet feared male flesh and close homosexual connection. *Erase and Forget* digs deep into the story of survivalist, mercenary and inspiration for Rambo, Bo Gritz, with whom Andrea Luka Zimmerman works to unpick his contradictory, politically complex life. The playfully provocative *What Can I Do with a Male Nude?* questions the conflicted status of the naked man across classical art and contemporary cinema, as well as in the home. The late Ron Peck had always hoped his film could be shown alongside *Rambo*.

bfi.org.uk

Richard Dyer: 'Action!'

In contemporary cinema, it is the action film that most characteristically delivers speed in a story. One has only to think of the stars of such films – Schwarzenegger, Stallone, Bruce Willis, Harrison Ford, Steven Seagal, Jean-Claude Van Damme, and now Keanu Reeves – to have an indication of whose thrills are being legitimated: straight white men. This doesn't mean that no one else can possibly imagine having the thrills alongside Arnie or Keanu, but it does contribute to the reproduction of a masculine structure of feeling. Extreme sensation is represented as experienced not within the body, but in the body's contact with the world, its rush, its expansiveness, its physical stress and challenge. There is nothing wrong with such feelings of extreme and, as it were, worldly sensation, but the movies tie them to male characters and male environments, suggesting they are really only appropriate to men. This is not a matter of saying that I want – let alone my wanting women to want – to have quite this kind of sensational experience, but that there is a deeper, underlying pattern of feeling, to do with freedom of movement, confidence in the body, engagement with the material world, that is coded as male (and straight and white, too) but to which all humans need access.

Action movies as the most common contemporary form of the cinema of sensation ally the speed they offer with white male characters. Women and people of colour may be let in on the action, but either in secondary roles or with a sense of their exceptionality. Yet the experience action movies offer is in another way not so traditionally masculine at all.

To go to an action movie is to sink back in the seat and say, 'show me a good time'. Maybe we also cringe, shield our eyes, convulse our bodies – maybe we are often not so much more sophisticated than those putative Lumière audiences – but mentally we abandon ourselves to the illusion. Many have seen this as the essence of nearly all film experience, no matter what the genre; it underlies the notion of 'classical cinema' that has become so entrenched in film studies.

Such surrender to pleasure has greatly worried cultural, and not just film, criticism. Perhaps the image that most famously captures this intellectual worry about movies as sensation is that of the feelies in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*: the masses hooked up to a wash of sensations as part of an enforced passivity that keeps them mindlessly turning the cogs of capitalism. There is a point here. Passivity in life, in politics, is problematic: it means acquiescing to a status quo that damages people along class, gender, racial, sexual and other lines; for many women lying back within heterosexual sex has not always meant enjoying it; and there are besides always others who pay the real price for the megabuck sensations of the world's well-to-do minority. Yet it is hard not to see in Huxley's hatred something else: a libidinal fear of passivity itself.

Modern discussion of cultural pleasures tends to take sexuality as the founding form of all enjoyment, as the appetite par excellence. Pleasures that are approved or disapproved of get mapped on to ideas of what sex is like. The notions of active

REGULAR PROGRAMME

Relaxed Screening: Time Bandits + intro and discussion

Mon 30 Oct 18:15

Woman with a Movie Camera: Preview:

Girl + Q&A with director Adura Onashile

Tue 7 Nov 20:40

African Odysseys: Preview: Mami Wata +

intro & panel discussion with director C.J.

'Fiery' Obasi and producer Oge Obasi

Sat 18 Nov 14:00

Restored: Twilight Szürkület + intro by

Jason Wood, BFI Executive Director of

Public Programmes and Audiences

Tue 21 Nov 18:20

Relaxed Screening: Run Lola Run Lola

Rennt

Mon 27 Nov 18:40

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at

bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info:

sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk



BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on

player.bfi.org.uk

BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop. We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.

Join the BFI mailing list for regular programme updates. Not yet registered?

Create a new account at

www.bfi.org.uk/signup

and passive have been made to do a great deal of muddled but suggestive work, ineluctably correlated with gender roles within heterosexuality. On the one hand, proper gender identity has seemed to be realised in the performance of active male and passive female coital roles. On the other hand, a phantasm of sex as assault has haunted the minds of heterosexual male intellectuals. As a result, when they have imagined passivity in sex they have imagined something terrifying. Passivity is thus both demeaning for a man, because it makes him like a woman, and frightening too. So it is with all delectation – since sex provides the measure of all pleasures. The worst thing imaginable is to go to the cinema to lie back and enjoy it. Which suggests another terror, lurking beneath the fear of being like, and being treated like, a woman. For what kind of a man is it who lies back and enjoys it? A queer, of course. Queers of every sex know that passivity need not be alarming, but then that's queers for you, not a palatable message for chaps hellbent on being straight.

In relation to adventure movies, there is a delicious paradox here. Such movies promote an active engagement with the world, going out into it, doing to the environment; yet enjoyment of them means allowing them to come to you, take you over, do you. When Jean-Claude Van Damme kicks his way out of trouble, when Harrison Ford leaps into the torrent in *The Fugitive*, when Keanu lies on his back under the careering bus in *Speed*, we may identify with them, imagine the rush of excitement as we brace ourselves against, and master, the world; but we're also letting ourselves be carried along, going with the flow of the movie, ecstatically manipulated.

The favoured position of hardcore fans for watching action movies in the cinema is slumped in the seat with legs slung over the seat in front. This is an excellent position for anal sex as well as for cunnilingus and fellatio. Come to think of it, for the male viewer action movies have a lot in common with being fellated. At the level of cultural imagery, the fellatee is considered the butch one – perhaps because he supplies the phallus, perhaps because fellatio facilitates a masculine dissociation of mind and body more readily than face-to-face coital positions. Whatever the reason, men cherish the illusion that their masculinity is not compromised by being fellated. Yet it's the other person, male or female, who's doing the work, really being active. So it is with action movies. In imagination, men can be Arnie or Keanu; in the seat, it's Arnie or Keanu pleasuring them. Now that's what I call speed.

Richard Dyer, *Sight and Sound*, October 1994

Andrea Luka Zimmerman is a Jarman Award-winning artist, filmmaker and cultural activist whose multi-layered practice calls for a profound re-imagining of the relationship between people, place and ecology. Andrea is known internationally for filmic explorations of class, precarity and social justice.

Andrea's films screen internationally, at festivals such as Berlin, Istanbul, Locarno and Oberhausen, as well as at Tate Modern, Lincoln Center and on MUBI. Andrea's work is distributed by LUX, Second Run, Grasshopper Films and Modern Films. *Estate*, a *Reverie* is part of the Arts Council Collection.

Andrea is currently working on a new feature film, *Wayfaring Stranger* (2024).

James Mackay is a film producer and moving image curator.

In the 70s and early 80s he was cinema programmer for the London Film-maker's Coop as well as selecting and presenting New British Avant Garde Film at the 1978 Edinburgh International Film Festival; an expanded series for the Forum of the Berlinale and curated the film and video program at the B2 Gallery.

In the 80s and early 90s he produced a number of film projects with Derek Jarman including *Imagining October*, *Angelic Conversation*, *The Last of England*, *The Garden and Blue*.

In addition to working with Jarman, Mackay also produced film projects for Ron Peck, John Maybury, Nina Danino, Hannah Collins amongst others, along with a number of music videos for The Smiths, Bob Geldof and the Pet Shop Boys amongst others.

He has been a visiting lecturer and has appeared at many film festival events as a guest speaker.

He now mainly concentrates on moving image work for galleries and festival events.