

Studio 75 presents

## THREE FILMS BY JULIET BELMAS

Sunday October 16 7 pm.



Still from PALE ANGUISH KEEPS 16mm (reversal), 10 min, 1990

Studio 75 is pleased to present three films by Juliet Belmas, a Vancouver based cinematographer, writer, musician and artist. The films were made on 16mm in the early 90s and are being re-released; Studio 75's screening is a special presentation in advance of the re-release.

Juliet Belmas, a Canadian anarchist activist, was at age 18 labelled a terrorist and jailed in a maximum-security prison for 20 years in 1984, for her role in an urban guerrilla group known as Direct Action. After her sentence was reduced on appeal she was released to art school where she wrote, directed and produced several short films about women in prison that garnered multiple awards and led to participation in numerous Canadian and International film festivals, academic lectures and panel discussions.

Belmas then went on to develop a long-standing career in cinematography in the Canadian film industry. In her spare time, she presents hands-on guerrilla filmmaking workshops.

Her look is distinguishable by a painterly cinematic style coupled with experimental production values (rear screen projection, optical printing, digital sound repetition) that add a heightened and fantastical feel to her narratives and compositions.

Critics describe her work as subtle, yet harrowing as she juxtaposes both the confining artifice of modern life and the all too real loss of liberty experienced by women in prison and life amongst the "free". Leading Canadian writer, feminist scholar, and human rights activist, Karlene Faith, cites Belmas' lens for furthering concerns with the individual struggle against the institutional powers of our society.

Belmas is currently writing a memoir of her experiences in Direct Action, and the prison that followed.

Note: the films will be presented as digital projections, not on the original 16mm.

## **JULIET BELMAS's ARTIST STATEMENT**

*As a lens based artist, I endeavor to explore the relationship between art and gender representation and spectatorship.*

*Using light, shadow, movement and sound, I make art films about women in prison that travel from non-art to art, from the impure to the pure blending experimental film techniques with narrative form to create complex narratives that challenge representational dynamics of women's socialization by focusing on women's resistance to that socialization.*

*My prison film trilogy aims to shift the representational dynamics of women in the prison film genre.*

## **FILMS LIST**

**RAPUNZEL** 16mm, 10 min, 1991/re-edited release 2011



A dramatic narrative based on the tragic and barbaric conditions faced by imprisoned Doukhobors and their abducted children during the 1950s in Canada. This film features a diageitic music score as plot device and an elderly prisoner as narrator of lost oral history.

RAPUNZEL premieres at Studio 75, London, England. Fall 2011.

**A YEAR WHOSE DAYS ARE LONG** 16mm, 15 min, 1992



An experimental narrative that features a jail setting juxtaposed against the wedding of Princess Diana on television, thrusting both post modern irreverence and reification of icons onto the refracted visceral harshness of a spartan, locked environment.

Winner of the Helen Pitt Award for Fine Art and celebrated at the Goethe Institute for German expressionism, *A YEAR WHOSE DAYS ARE LONG* enjoys a broad audience ranging from academic lectures, panel discussions, week-long screenings in art galleries to numerous Canadian and International film festivals, most notably the Vancouver International Film Festival, the Cretiel International Women's Film Festival in Paris, the Captured On Film Festival in the UK, the National Film Board of Canada (Re/Defining Nations series in Toronto), the Elizabeth Fry Society (national tour entitled *Canada's Horror Palaces: Prisons For Women*), the Justice Institute of BC's Law Symposium of Conflict and Resolution, Dianne Farris Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, and the Pacific Cinematheque in Vancouver, Simon Fraser University's Department of Criminology.

**PALE ANGUISH KEEPS** 16mm (reversal), 10 min, 1990



*PALE ANGUISH KEEPS* is an intensely personal document expressing the alienation, pain, and trauma of a prison experience. Using techniques of German expressionism, it examines the social and institutional forces that inform one's subjective self-definition.

This is a film of stark contrasts, combining harsh prison reality with escape into the fantasy, beauty, and grace of classical ballet. The conflict is underscored by elements of the sound track: reverberating prison noises, punk rock music and the poetic works of notable writers and political prisoners Oscar Wilde and Breyton Breytenbach.

*P.A.K.* has screened at numerous festivals including the Vancouver International Film Festival, Captured On Film Festival in the UK and the International Film Festival of Mexico City, where it was awarded Special Mention. It has also been the subject of academic lectures and panel discussions across Canada that include the National Film Board in Toronto, the Elizabeth Fry Society, Simon Fraser University's Department of Criminology and most recently, the Department of Art History at the University of Victoria.