Directors' Bio

Over the last twenty years, Peggy Ahwesh has produced one of the most heterogeneous bodies of work in the field of experimental film and video. A true bricoleur, her tools include narrative and documentary styles, improvised performance and scripted dialogue, synch-sound film, found footage, digital animation, and crude Pixelvision video. The work is primarily an investigation cultural identity and the role of the subject, in various genres.

Ahwesh started out with Super-8, attracted, like Stan Brakhage and Jonas Mekas before her, to the medium's evocation of home movies. For her, this was a subversively amateur form, and also a discourse that yielded traditionally female-gendered themes like home and family, relationships, and confessions, which she appropriated as scenarios. She and other female filmmakers of the time had little use for the primarily formal strategies of the structural materialist film tradition (which was in any case dominated by men), and viewed conventions of direction, character, and performance as tools. For these filmmakers, feminism presented a viable avant-garde praxis: unlike the radical formal dislocations of materialist film, the political narrative inherent in feminist art was exceedingly resistant to cooption by dominant media or advertising.

Ahwesh's work, for all its reliance on theoretical concerns, isn't dry or forbidding. She values humor, playfulness, and, ultimately, the pleasure of the audience. The cluttered sets and fragmented stories in much of her work evince a baroque and almost mystical sensibility, with a lineage including the ornate films of Jack Smith and Kenneth Anger. Of course, this is a mysticism that locates its systems of meaning in mass culture, and in recent years Ahwesh has expanded her work to consider the techniques and critiques of nascent digital culture, including videogames and the Internet.

Ahwesh has developed a practice that insists on political and social topicality, handled with theoretical and formal rigor, while remembering the audience. It is her lighter touch that has helped make her work, densely critical as it is, so accessible to so many people. She draws them into the world and traditions of avant-garde film and video, where, as she has remarked, "there's nothing to prove and no money to make," only the pleasures of the text.

Her work has been widely shown, at the Guggenheim Museum, New York; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; the Balie Theater, Amsterdam; the Filmmuseum, Brussels; the Rotterdam International Film Festival, Rotterdam; Museu d’Art Contemporani Barcelona (MACBA), Barcelona; The Flaherty Seminar, the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and The Museum of Modern Art, New York, among other venues. Ahwesh had a mid-career retrospective in the New American Film &Video Series of the Whitney Museum called Girls Beware! (1997) and was featured in the epic program Big As Life: A History of American 8mm Films at MoMA. Her numerous awards include the Alpert Award in the Arts, a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, and grants from the Jerome Foundation, Creative Capital, and the New York State Council on the Arts. She teaches at Bard College.

(Electronic Arts Intermix, NYC)
SCREENINGS & EXHIBITIONS

2006. One Person Shows
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia; Madrid, Spain (retrospective)
American University of Beirut; Beirut, Lebanon
Anthology Film Archives; NY, NY (theatrical run, Certain Women)
“Ahwesh: Personal Archive Show”, Anthology Film Archives; NY, NY

2006. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
“Stitch & Split: Selves & Territories in Scienc Fiction”, Fundació Antoni Tàpies; Barcelona, Spain
The Württembergischer Kunstverein; Stuttgart, Germany
IAMNOWHERE, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College; Annandale, NY
“The Imagination of Disaster”, Ocularis; Brooklyn, NY
Silverlake Film Festival: MP4 Fest, LA, CA
Copilandia: una Isla Libre de Propiedad Intellectual, Seville, Spain (traveled)
“Art as a Form of Conversation”, Dashanzi Arts Festival, Beijing, China (traveled)
Centre de Cultura Contemporania, Barcelona, Spain
“Games People Play”, Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA
Foundation for Art, Culture & Technology, Liverpool, UK
“Breaking the Game”, www.workspace-unlimited.org (on-line symposium)

2005. One Person Shows
Wisconsin Film Festival; Madison, WI (retrospective)
femme totale; Dortmund, Germany (screening & panel)
University of Chicago, Film Studies Center; Chicago, IL

2005. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
Pompidou Center; Paris, France
MIX: NY Lesbian & Gay Experimental Film Fesitval; NY, NY
“Jerome, Hill & Foundation”, MoMA; NY, NY (screening & panel)
The Childhood Show, Magic Lantern Cinema; Providence, RI
“Brides of Frankenstein”, San Jose Museum of Art; San Jose, CA

2004. One Person Shows
Rotterdam International Film Festival; Rotterdam, The Netherlands
The Museum of Modern Art, Mediascope; New York, NY
New York Underground Film Festival; New York, NY (traveled)
Institute for Studies in the Arts, ASU; Tempe, Arizona
“Videos by Peggy Ahwesh”, Terrorvision Show, Exit Art; New York, NY
Redcat Theater, California Institute for the Arts; Valencia, CA (residency)
Chicago Underground Film Festival; Chicago, IL
Brighton Cinematheque; Brighton, UK
Zinebi 46 Festival; Bilbao, Spain
Cinematexas 10; Austin, TX
Union Theater, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; Milwaukee, WI

2004. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
“Visions of Excess” Press Play Video, Carnegie Mellon University; Pgh, PA
“The Walking Picture Palace”, Anthology Film Archives; NY (curator Mark McElhatten)
New York Video Festival; Film Society of Lincoln Center; New York, NY
European Media Arts Festival; Osnabruck, Germany
“Acting Out”, York University; Toronto, Canada
Festival of Contemporary Arts: City of Women; Ljubljana, Slovenia
“Lookalike: Barbie Lolita Lara Croft”, Nederlands Fotomuseum; Amsterdam, The Netherlands
2003. One Person Shows
Mills College Art Museum, Contemporary Exhibitions; Oakland, CA
Pixil This 12; LA, CA
Princeton University; Princeton, NJ
Binghamton University; Binghamton, NY

2003. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
Image Forum Festival; Tokyo, Japan (traveled)
Russian National Contemporary Art Center, Experimental Videos from US;
Moscow, Russia (traveled)
“I Wonder About You and Through You: Women Respond to Technology
with Wonder and Caution”; Portland, OR
Bellevue Art Museum; Seattle, WA
Moscow International Film Fest; Russia (traveled)
MoMA, Stand-by retrospective program; NY
Fundacio Antoni Tapis, “Stitch and Split: Selves and Territories in Science Fiction”;
Barcelona, Spain
“Mirror, Mirror”, Surrey Institute of Art & Design; London, UK

2002. One Person Shows
“Sandbox Antics, Tantrums, and Tourist Attractions”, Pittsburgh Filmmakers
and Carnegie Mellon University; Pittsburgh, PA (retrospective)
New Collaborations: Electronic Intersections, Institute for Electronic Arts, School of Art
and Design, Alfred University; Alfred, NY (conference)

2002. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
2002 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, NY
Rotterdam International Film Festival; Rottedrdam, The Netherlands
Image Forum Festival; Tokyo, Japan (traveled)
Animations, P.S.1/MoMA; Queens, NY (traveled Kunst Werke Berlin)
Electromediascope, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Department of Modern and Contemporary
Art; Kansas City, MO
Dangerous Beauty: The Videos, Jewish Community Center; NY
Verbindingen/Jonctions Festival 6; Brussels, Belgium
Machine Love, Vidarte2002 International Festival; Mexico City, Mexico
“Films That Rise to the Surface (of Clarified Butter)”; Balagan, Boston,
“Catastrophe & Spectacle”, Oberhausen Film Festival; Oberhausen, Germany

2001. One Person Shows
California Institute for the Arts; Valencia, CA (screenings/residency)
Sam Spiegel Film School; Jerusalem, Israel (screenings/residency)
The Jerusalem Cinematheque; Jerusalem, Israel
Women Direct, Ithaca College; Ithaca, NY (screening & conference)
“All the Girls with Cameras in Their Heads”, Cinematexas 6; Austin, TX (retrospective)

Laracroft:ism, On Female Heroines, Nomads and Residents panel; NY
“Imitation of Kiss”, Warhol Museum; Pittsburgh, PA (traveled)
Three Women from Brooklyn, Ocularis; Brooklyn, NY
New York Video Festival, Film Society of Lincoln Center; NY
Pandaemonium: Festival of the Moving Image; London, UK (traveled)
Some Kind of Loving, Joanie4Jackie (curator Astria Suparak) (traveled)
The Stained Handkerchief, Maastricht; The Netherlands (traveled)
To Make it Better Every Time: Internal Security; Munich, Germany (traveled)
“All is Fair in Love and War”; Amsterdam, The Netherlands (traveled)

2000. One Person Shows
The Flaherty Seminar, International Film Seminars, NY (curator Kathy Geritz)

2000. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
The End: An Independent View of Contemporary Culture (‘82-‘00), Exit Art; NY
Science is Fiction: The Films of Jean Painleve, MoMA; NY
World Wide Video Festival; Amsterdam, The Netherlands
DUMBO Arts Festival; Brooklyn, NY
Cinematexas 5, Austin, TX
The Trinity Show, Ocularis; Brooklyn, NY (curator Jim Browne)

1999. One Person Shows
The Guggenheim Museum; NY (lecture)
LUX Cinema; London, England (retrospective)
Warhol’s Grave, The Balie Theater; Amsterdam, The Netherlands
The Grand Illusion Cinema/Wiggly World; Seattle, WA
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; SF, CA (residency/retrospective)
Splice This!, 8mm Film Festival; Toronto, Canada (retrospective)
Three by Peggy Ahwesh, Anthology Film Archives; NY
Nocturne and What!, Pacific Film Archive; Berkeley, CA
Criminal Sexuality: The Films of Peggy Ahwesh, Pacific Cinematheque; Vancouver, Canada (retrospective)

1999. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
Rotterdam International Film Festival; The Netherlands
European Media Art Festival; Osnabruck, Germany
GirlsKnifeTheoryGore, Cornershop; Buffalo, NY
Dark Shadows: Recent Avant-Garde Films, Chicago Filmmakers; Chicago, IL

1998. One Person Shows
8mm Films by Peggy Ahwesh, MoMA; NY
The Secret Charts, Jonctions Festival; Brussels, Belgium
(installation w Amy Sillman)
Girls Beware! (reprise), Jonctions Festival 2; Brussels, Belgium

Big As Life: An American History of 8mm Films, MoMA; NY
Pandaemonium: Festival of the Moving Image; London, England
Lo-Fi Baroque, Threadwaxing Space; New York, NY
Reel New York, WNET/Ch13 TV; New York, NY
MadCat Women’s Film Festival; San Francisco, CA
New York Film Festival, Film Society of Lincoln Center; NY (traveled)
1997. One Person Shows
Girls Beware!, New American Film & Video Series, Whitney Museum of American Art; NY (retrospective)
Subtle Subversions: The Films of Peggy Ahwesh, Chicago Filmmakers; Chicago, IL
Low Tech, Museu d’Art Contemporani Barcelona; Barcelona, Spain

Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late 20th Century Art, ICA; Boston, MA (traveled)
MIX ’97: NY Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival; NY
MIX ’97: Mexico and MIX ’97: Brazil (traveled)
Kybernetes: Encuentro de Video y Electronicas; Bogota, Columbia

1996. One Person Shows
Vermont College, MFA Program; Montpelier, VT (visiting artist)
Cinema Studies Program, NYU; New York, NY
Open Zone: Interactive Phenomena & Quicktime; Barcelona, Spain (traveled)

1996. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
Korper Und Sexualitat, deutsches filmmuseum; Frankfurt, Germany
Cine Club at Anthology Film Archive; NY
Danish Workshop Film Festival; Copenhagen, Denmark
Slacker Attitude, London Electronic Arts; London, England (traveled)
A Tribute to Squat Theater, Artists’ Space; NY
1995 Whitney Biennial Exhibition; NY (traveled)
Statens Musem for Kunst; Copenhagen, Denmark

1995. One Person Shows
University of South Florida; Tampa, FL (visiting artist)
The Films of Peggy Ahwesh, Pacific Film Archives; Berkeley, CA
Odd and Original: Sexploitation Films by Doris Wishman, Roxy Theater & the Other Cinema; San Francisco, CA (curator)

1995. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
More Hysteria, Please!, Columbia University; NY (Lacanian Ink)
Festival International du Nouveau Cinema et de la Video; Montreal, Canada
Coming to Power: Xperimental Films by Women, Film Makers’ Co-op; NY (traveled)
San Francisco International Film Festival; San Francisco, CA
1995 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art; NY (traveled)
Wellington and Auckland International Film Festivals; New Zealand

1994. One Person Shows
Harvard Film Archive, Carpenter Center for the Arts; Cambridge, MA (retrospective)
American Museum of the Moving Image; Queens, NY
Anthology Film Archives; New York, NY
World Wide Video Festival; The Hague, The Netherlands

Bad Girls, The New Museum; NY (w The Scary Movie)
“Pixilvision: The Philosophical Toy”, 3rd NY Video Festival; NY
American Film Institute Video Festival; Los Angeles, CA
Impakt Festival; Utrecht, The Netherlands
Ex-Post Factory: After Warhol, Pacific Film Archive; Berkeley, CA
Festival of Independents; Philadelphia, PA
MIX 94: NY Gay & Lesbian Experimental Film Festival; NY
MIX '94 Brazil: Festival das Manifestacoes da Sexualidade, Brazil (traveled)
Museum of Sound and Image; Sao Paulo, Brazil (traveled)
Man Trouble, Exit Art; NY (curator Jason Simon),
American Independence, Institute for Contemporary Art; London, England
X-Rated Films by Women, Films Charas; New York

1993. One Person Shows
Video Premiers, Museum of Modern Art; NY (w Margie Strosser)
Juger und Sammler: Die Neuen Nomaden, Eiszeit Kino; Berlin, Germany
Strange Paradises, The Cinematheque; San Francisco, CA
The Opium Den at The Pleasure Dome at Cine Cycle; Toronto, Canada

1993. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
New Directions in American AG (1981-91), London Film Co-op; England (traveled)
Coming to Power: Xplicit Films by Women, David Zwerner Gallery; NY (traveled)
Dallas Video Festival; Dallas, Texas
Picturing Ritual, Center for Photography at Woodstock; Woodstock, NY

1992. One Person Shows
Sarah Lawrence College; Bronxville, NY
sex/POSITIVE; Philadelphia, PA (conference/screening)
University of Florida, a Critical Art Ensemble project; Tallahassee, FL
Coming Soon, American Culture & Popular Culture Associations Annual Conference; Louisville, KY (w Keith Sanborn)

Flaming and Other Creatures, Harvard Film Archive; Cambridge, MA
Through Her Eyes: Women in Film and Video, The Learning Channel
Eros and Thanatos, Woodstock Guild; Woodstock, NY
The Travel and Leisure Show, 4 Walls; Brooklyn, NY

1991. One Person Shows
The Wexner Center; Columbus, OH
Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center; Buffalo, NY

1991 Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art; NY (traveled)
"Return of Visual Pleasure", Whitney Museum of American Art; NY
Films de Femmes Fest International de Créteil et du Marne; Créteil, France
Ars Electronica Video Festival; Linz, Austria
Reframing the Family, Artists Space; New York, NY
Melbourne & Sidney International Film Festivals; Australia
Al-Ismailiyah International Film Festival; Al-Ismailiyah, Egypt
Pearls Before Swine, Eiszeit Kino; Berlin, Germany
Nucleo dos Cineasates Independentes; Lisbon and O Porto, Portugal
1990. One Person Shows
Cineprobe, MoMA; NY
The Carnegie Museum of Art; Pittsburgh, PA
The Pittsburgh Filmmakers; Pittsburgh, PA
In Bataille's Dark Chamber, The Collective for Living Cinema; NY (w Keith Sanborn)
“Child”, Kitchen Center for Video, Music & Performance; NY (panel/screening)
Image Film and Video Center; Atlanta, GA
Anti-Censorship Fest, Coalition for Freedom of Expression; Berkeley, CA
The London International Film Festival; London, England
The Pleasure Dome; Toronto, Canada

1990. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
Image World, Whitney Museum of American Art; NY
A Passage Illuminated: American A/G Film 1980-90; Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Festival de Nouveau Cinema; Montreal, Canada
Independent Focus, WNET/CH 13; NY, NY
Are You Now or Have You Ever Been... Film in the Cities; Minneapolis, MN
Opaque Projections: Childhood & Memory, LACE; Los Angeles, CA
Sexual Politics: The Cutting Edge, Dartmouth College; Hanover, NH

1989. One Person Shows
In Bataille's Dark Chamber, Small Press Distribution Center; Berkeley (w Keith Sanborn)
Old & New Masters of Super 8, Anthology Film Archives; NY
The Collective for Living Cinema; New York
Massachusetts College of Art; Boston, MA

1989. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
The Politics & Poetics of Sexuality, Feminism & Reproductive Freedom, Hallwalls
Breaking the Fall, Collective for Living Cinema; New York (curator Mark McElhatten)
“The Body & Other Tales of Joy & Woe”, Critical Art Ensemble Media Festival; Tallahassee, FL

1987. One Person Shows
Film Forum; Los Angeles, CA
The Cinematheque; San Francisco, CA
Super 8mm: The Last Frontier, Currier Gallery of Art; Hanover, NH

Infermental: A Video Magazine; Buffalo, NY (curators Chris Hill & Peter Weibel) (traveled)
Independent America, American Museum of the Moving Image; Queens, NY
Speculum of the Other Woman, The Other Cinema; SF, CA
Ann Arbor Super 8mm Film Festival; Ann Arbor, MI
Super 8 Solar System, Artists Space; NY

1984. One Person Shows
Women’s Caucus for Art, National Conference; Boston, MA
Super 8 Motel, The Kitchen Center; NY
Women in Film, William Penn Museum; Harrisburg, PA
Eiszeit Kino; Berlin, Germany

1984. Selected Festivals. Group Shows
Ironic Naturalism, Hallwalls; Buffalo, NY (screening/panel)
**F I L M & V I D E O G R A P H Y**

**Untitled, Brooklyn, 2005 (in Mark’s memory)** video, sd, col, 5 min, 2006

**Pistolary! Film and Video by Peggy Ahwesh (DVD set)**
 sd, col and b&w, 195 min total, 2005  Distributed by the Video Data Bank, Chicago

**Certain Women (with Bobby Abate)** video, sd., col., 72 min, 2004
Melodrama based on the genre writings of Erskine Caldwell. Four young women from the same unenlightened working class town, doomed to the same fate

**The Star Eaters**, video, sd., col., 24 min, 2003

**Radio/Guitar (Ahwesh & Ess)** audio, 45 min, 2002, Ecstatic Peace & Table of the Elements

**She Puppet** audio, sd., col., 15 min., 2001
On Tomb Raider, the video game featuring busty, virtual superstar Lara Croft

**73 Suspect Words & Heaven’s Gate** video, sd., b&w, 8 min, 2000-01
Language poems, culled from internet databases, built on search results

**Nocturne**  16mm, sd., b&w, 30 min, 1998
Film of disquietude, anxiety and longing with quotes from Kathy Acker and The Marquis de Sade on the violence of nature, human corporeality and desire

**The Secret Charts (with Amy Sillman)** video monitors, painting, shadow, drawing installation, 1998
Commissioned by the Junctions Festival, Brussels, Belgium

**the vision machine** 16mm&video, sd, col, 20 min, 1997  A film essay on the feminine speaking subject and the power dynamics of transmitting and receiving a joke

**Magnetism, Attraction and Repulsion, Deep Sleep, Auto Suggestion, Animal Magnetism, Mesmerism, and Fascination** Quick Time, video, sd, col, 15 min., 1996

**Discorporation** http://www.echonyc.com/~peggy text, photos and QT, 1996
Web site exploring topics of expenditure, loss and desire at the end of the century

**The Color of Love** 16mm, sd., col., 10 min., 1994
A hopelessly inept porno film from the '70s, deteriorated with age and poor storage conditions, turned into a beautiful and powerful film, both erotic and disarming

**Strange Weather (made with Margie Strosser)** video, sd., b&w., 50 min., 1993
Ostensibly about the depiction of drug addiction becomes unsettling by the way the work opens up the question of what constitutes “authenticity” in the video image

**The Scary Movie** 16mm, sd., b&w, 9 min., 1993

**The Deadman (made with Keith Sanborn)** 16mm, sd., b&w, 37 min., 1990
From a story by Georges Bataille, in a combination of elegance, raunchy defilement and barbaric splendor. Charts the adventures of a near naked heroine who sets in motion a scabrous free-form orgy before returning to the house to die
Martina’s Playhouse   S8mm, sd., col., 20 min., 1989   As Pee-Wee Herman Playhouse suggests a potential crisis in masculinity, then Martina’s Playhouse signals that the equally artificial construct of femininity is ready to explode

The Fragments Project   S8mm, sd., col., 55-60 min. (program varies), 1985-95
A collection of camera rolls & outtakes, this is a study of culture outside of labels and categories, privileging playful fragments, unfixed semiotic signs and slippery identities

Philosophy in the Bedroom, Pts. 1 & 2   S8mm, sd, col., 15 min. 1987-89
I Ride a Pony Named Flame   video, sd, col, 5 min., 1988
From Romance to Ritual   S8mm, sd., col, 20 min., 1985
The Pittsburgh Trilogy   S8mm, sd, col, 35 min., 1982-83

INTERNET RESOURCES

Senses of Cinema, Great Directors Critical Database
http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/03/ahwesh.html

Creative Capital Foundation, Project page on The Star Eaters
http://www.channel.creative-capital.org/project_158.html

Electronic Arts Intermix Distribution, Ahwesh page
http://www.eai.org/eai/artist.jsp?artistID=5768

Stranded in the Jungle, Ch. 17 Decomposing by Steven Shaviro
http://www.dhalgren.com/Stranded/17.html

Cinemad Magazine interview with Scott MacDonald
http://www.cinemadmag.com/page2.html

Felix Journal of Independent Media
http://ww.e-felix.org/artists/ahwesh.html

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahwesh, Peggy. "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider." Film Comment 37 (July/August 2001) p 77.


Gunning, Tom "Towards a Minor Cinema: Fonoroff, Herwitz, Ahwesh, Klahr, Lapore and Solomon" Motion Picture 3 (winter 89-90) pp 2-5.


Marks, Laura U. "Loving a Disappearing Image" Cinéma et Mélancolie Vol 8, no. 1-2, Québec (1999), pp 93-111.


ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Associate Professor, Film and Electronic Arts Program
Bard College 1990 – currently

Film/Video Discipline Faculty, Milton Avery Graduate School in the Arts
Bard College 1991- currently

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Bard College Research Grant, 2002
Creative Capital, 2002
Alpert Award in the Arts, Cal Arts/Alpert Foundation 2000
New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), Video Fellowship 2000
New York Foundation for the Arts (NYSCA), Film/Video Fellowship 1993, 2002
New York Foundation for the Arts (NYSCA), Distribution Grant 1992, 1999
Guggenheim Foundation, Fellowship 1996
Jerome Foundation, Film Project Award 1990, 1998
Art Matters, 1992, 1995